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ABSTRACT

Intended to help readers develop an appreciation of the contributions of Franco-Americans to the cultural heritage of the United States, this book, the sixth of six volumes, presents 26 chapters representing many perspectives--from the historical to the sociological--illustrating the thinking and feelings of those in the forefront of Franco-American studies. This volume focuses on Franco-Americans in Louisiana. The following readings are presented: "From Subjects to Citizens" (George W. Cable); "Ball Room Brawls" (William C. C. Claiborne); "Peace and Harmony?" (William C. C. Claiborne); "New Orleans in 1838" (Harriet Martineau); "French Immigration and the Battle of New Orleans" (George W. Cable); "Political Reinforcements of Ethnic Dominance in Louisiana, 1812-1845" (Joseph C. Tregle, Jr.); "The Rural French: Acadians, Creole, and Blacks" (W. H. Sparks); "Who are the Creoles?" (George W. Cable); "Alexis de Tocqueville in New Orleans January 1-3, 1832" (G. W. Pierson); "A Louisiana Sugar Plantation" (Charles Gayarre); "Madame Lalaurie: A Contemporary French Account" (L. Souvestre); "The State of Slavery" (Major Amos Stoddard); "The Free Men of Color of Louisiana" (P. F. de Gournay); "The Free People of Color in Louisiana and St. Domingue: A Comparative Portrait of Two Three-Caste Slave Societies" (Laura Foner); "The Free Negro in the New Orleans Economy, 1850-1860" (Robert C. Reinders); "The Free Negro in Ante-Bellum Louisiana" (Annie Lee West Stahl); "Free Blacks, New Orleans, and R. L. Desdunes" (Charles E. O'Neil); "Some Effects of Acadian Settlement on the Pattern of Land Occupance in Lafayette Parish" (Lyle Givens Williams); "The Forbidding Atchafalaya Basin" (Louise Callan); "The Battle of Bayou Queue-Tortue" (Alexandre Barde); "Rebels without a Cause" and "Secession from the Confederacy?" (two contemporary news items); "Ozeme Carriere and the St. Landry Jayhawkers, 1863-1865" (Carl A. Brasseaux); "Prince Camille de Polignac and the American Civil War. 1863-1865" (Roy O. Hatton); "The Battle of Bull Run" (P. G. T. Beauregard); and "The Battle of Pleasant Hill" (Sarah A. Dorsey). (LH)

A FRANCO-AMERICAN OVERVIEW

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Volume 6

A FRANCO-AMERICAN OVERVIEW

Volume 6

LOUISIANA

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INTRODUCTION

FRENCH LOUISIANA: THE ANTEBELLUM PERIOD

The antebellum period is an important transitional stage in the history of French Louisiana. Although subjected to the pressures of large-scale Anglo-American immigration, new political structures, a developing plantation economy, and improved transportation, Louisiana's French community maintained its cultural identity. Its resistance to the Americanization of society was bolstered by the influx of French immigrants and Santo Domingo exiles. French Louisianians, nevertheless, generally shared the developing Southern mores and adopted prevailing regional attitudes toward slavery, though they tempered them with the casual acceptance of miscegenation which led to the emergence of an important French-speaking group, the Free People of Color. The Louisiana French community, therefore, was never monolithic, composed as it was, not only of urban and rural Creoles, whose interests frequently diverged, and of French-speaking blacks, whose position was ambiguous, to say the least, but also of rural Acadians whose rapidly expanding population was also divided into social and economic subgroups. The divisions which had appeared by the end of the Spanish regime persisted through the antebellum period and surfaced forcefully during the Civil War which found Creoles, Acadians, and French-speaking blacks on both sides of the conflict.

Despite significant cultural differences, however, French Louisianians closed ranks against the incoming Americans and against the foreign domination which the newcomers represented. In his essay, «From Subjects to Citizens» George W. Cable examines the reaction of the Creoles to the establishment of American rule. As he notes, the confrontations which had marred the festivities surrounding the cession did not abate when the French representative left. W.C.C. Claiborne, the first American territorial governor, bewailed the French officers' «disorderly disposition» which led to the ballroom brawls he describes in a letter. He pointed out the political implication of these clashes, which were apparently quite frequent during the early years of American rule, though by the end of 1804 the harrassed governor affirmed the existence of a «friendly understanding between the Modern and Ancient Louisianians.» Claiborne's optimism notwithstanding, the rift between French Louisianians and Anglo-Americans persisted through the antebellum period, as Harriet Martineau records in «New Orleans in 1838.»

Despite the influx of Anglo-Americans in the early nineteenth century, the French community resisted absorption into American society, in part because its ranks were swollen by a steady French immigration which contin-

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ued throughout the century. Pierre and Jean Lafitte, whose piracy has been endowed with a romantic aura by novelists and film makers, were two of those French immigrants who sought their fortune on the Gulf Coast. The impact of French immigration on Louisiana as well as on the War of 1812 is discussed by George W. Cable in «French Immigration and the Battle of New Orleans.»

The growth of that Francophone community had political ramifications because the new immigrants, the so-called «foreign French,» soon identified with the ancienne population to resist Americanization. The overtones of this fusion are treated by Joseph G. Tregle, Jr., in «Political Reinforcement of Ethnic Dominance in Louisiana, 1812-1845.»

Political alliances, however, belied the cultural and social diversity within the Francophone population. Writing in 1882 about Louisiana as he knew it fifty years earlier, W.H. Sparks discusses, in «The Rural French: Acadians, Creoles, and Blacks,» the co-existence of distinct groups in the rural parishes. The urban community, on the other hand, is examined by George W. Cable in «Who are the Creoles?». Alexandre de Tocqueville, the astute commentator on Jacksonian America, offers a first hand account of Creole life, which is as presented by G.W. Pierson in «Alexis de Tocqueville in New Orleans, January 1-3, 1832.»

Although Creoles, particularly the New Orleans and plantation aristocracies, were by far the most visible segment of the Francophone community, numerically they constituted but a small portion which would eventually be outnumbered by French-speaking blacks and, to a greater extent, by the Acadians. In the antebellum period, French-speaking black slaves were found in large numbers in New Orleans, as well as along the Mississippi River, and in the Southern parishes. Although guaranteed certain fundamental protections under existing slave codes, they were in reality entirely at the mercy of their masters. Some historians have argued that the Catholic Church had a tempering influence on the institution of slavery in French and Spanish colonies, but the accounts indicate that treatment of slaves varied considerably from plantation to plantation according to the attitudes of the slave owner. The prejudices of the observers also colored the reports. For example, Charles E. Gayarré, the Creole historian and sugar planter, gives a nostalgic, apologetic view of slavery when he describes «A Louisiana Sugar Plantation» which he remembered from childhood days. Not all antebellum accounts of slavery were so idyllic, however, as is demonstrated in L. Souvestre's «Madame Lalaurie: A Contemporary Account,» which relates the gracious lady's notorious cruelty to her black chattels. The condition of most slaves, in French Louisiana as in the rest of the South, lay somewhere between these extremes as Amos Stoddard recognized even when engaging in diatribes against the South's «peculiar institution». His essay, «The State of Slavery,» tries to offer a balanced view of what slavery was like in French Louisiana.

Subject to white supervision on plantations, blacks adopted Creole, a French-based dialect incorporating some African speech patterns, in order to communicate with their masters. Creole was also spoken by large numbers of the Free People of Color whose community played an important role in the economic and cultural life of antebellum Louisiana. Although denied access to the political process and entry into white society, many French-speaking free blacks attained positions of eminence. The gens de couleur libres were studied by P.F. de Gournay whose nineteenth-century essay, «The Free Man of Color of Louisiana,» describes the ambiguous position of free blacks. The origins and evolution of this social group are examined by Laura Foner in «The Free People of Color in Louisiana and St. Domingue: A comparative Portrait of Two Three-Caste Societies.» As suggested by Ms. Foner, the broad spectrum of legal privileges enjoyed by free blacks during the colonial period, particularly property rights, persisted in the antebellum period, despite frequent attacks by some segments of white society. Thus free to engage in business, many free blacks rose to economic and professional prominence. In the large free black communities of Natchitoches and St. Landry parishes, for example, black Creoles, such as Martin Donato and François Gassion Metoyer, became wealthy planters and large slaveowners. Les gens libres de couleurs, however, were more visible in New Orleans where they were artisans, businessmen, and professionals. The Crescent City's prosperous free-black community is examined by Robert C. Reinders in «The Free Negro in the New Orleans Economy, 1850-1860.»

Business, however, was not the only realm in which the free man of color excelled. Whether fathered by white planters or by free black parents, the free man of color often received the best possible education, and many were sent to boarding schools in Paris. The para-legal means by which Creoles maintained their quadroon mistresses and provided for their children are discussed by Annie Lee West Stahl in «The Free Negro in Antebellum Louisiana.» Well educated and prosperous, these free blacks were among antebellum Louisiana's most notable writers. The career of their earliest historian, Rodolphe Desdunes, himself a cultivated free man of color, and the impact of the group on Louisiana culture are examined by Charles Edwards O'Neill in «Free Blacks, New Orleans, and R.L. Desdunes.»

Though numerous, the French-speaking blacks were clearly outnumbered by the Acadians. During the antebellum period, the Acadian population grew from 5,002 in 1810 to 16,342 in 1860. A rural people, they were generally small farmers and ranchers, although between 1830 and 1860 a few became sugar and cotton planters. The early economic pursuits of the Acadian small farmer and their consequences for landholding patterns and architecture are examined by Lyle Givens Williams in «Some Effects of the Acadian Settlement on the Pattern of Land Occupation in Lafayette Parish.» Acadian settlement and economic development centered in the natural levees bordering the navigable waterways in present-day West Baton Rouge, Iberville, Ascension, St. James, Assumption, Lafourche, Terrebonne, Iberia, St. Martin, Lafayette, Vermilion and St. Landry parishes. Except for the headlands, near the streams, much of the area was inaccessible, as Philippine Duchesne, the Sacred Heart nun who founded the Grand Coteau Academy, relates in «The Forbidding Atchafalaya Basin.» Thus protected by this massive natural barrier, the Acadians, particularly Cajuns residing west of the Atchafalaya River, maintained their cultural and ethnic identity into the twentieth century.

The Louisiana frontier left an indelible mark on Acadian society. The hostile environment reinforced group ties and when confronted by cattle rustlers in the late 1850s, Acadian farmers and ranchers banded with a few Creoles as vigilantes to protect their interests. Vigilante raids prompted the formation of anti-vigilante groups, manned and led by alleged criminals, and the inevitable *result was an armed confrontation. The celebrated Battle of Bayou Queue de Tortue is recounted by Alexandre Barde, the vigilante propugandist, in the essay by that name.*

The Acadian individualism manifested in the vigilante movement also characterized the Cajun response to the Civil War. Many Acadian farmers and ranchers, particularly those residing west of Bayou Teche, were not slaveholders. They could not identify with the Southern rebellion whose goal was the establishment of a slave republic. Nevertheless, Confederate conscription units, manned principally by unsympathetic Texans, impressed large numbers of Cajuns into the army, frequently delivering them in chains to training centers. Acadian feelings toward the Confederated cause thus quickly shifted from indifference to hostility, and Acadian conscripts refused to fight, as related by the (Franklin) Attakapas Register in «Rebels Without a Cause.» Moreover, when Louisiana units retreated through the bayou country during the Teche campaigns of 1863, Acadian conscripts deserted in large numbers. In fact, most predominantly Acadian units experienced desertion rates over 80 percent. Acadian hostility to the Confederacy is reflected in a contemporary newspaper account entitled «Secession from the Confederacy?».

In present-day Evangeline Parish, Creole ranchers suffered the same trauma and like their Acadian neighbors to the South, deserted in large numbers during the Teche campaigns. Unlike the Cajuns, however, the prairie Creoles and, later, free blacks impressed into Confederate work details organized anti-Confederate units called Jayhawkers to rid their homeland of conscription units. Carl A. Brasseaux recounts one such popular uprising in «Ozeme Carrière and the St. Landry Jayhawkers, 1863-1865.»

Not all French Louisianians, however, resisted the Confederacy. On the contrary, scions of Acadian and Creole planter families rallied around the Stars and Bars shortly after secession. In fact, the first Confederate actions of the war, the siege of Fort Sumter and the First Battle of Manassas, were directed by Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard, a New Orleans Creole who recalls the first major Confederate victory in «The Battle of Bull Run.» The Creole general also aided the Southern cause by recruiting Prince Camille de Polignac, a French nobleman, who had a brilliant career as a Rebel general, the only foreigner, in fact, to hold flag rank in the Civil War. His career is detailed by Roy O. Hatton in «Prince Camille de Polignac and the American Civil War, 1863-1865.» Polignac and Acadian-planter-turned-Confederate-General Alfred Mouton led Confederate units at the Battle of Pleasant Hill (1864), the most significant Rebel victory in Louisiana. Mouton's heroics, however, cost him his life, a Confederate tragedy recalled by Sarah Ann Dorsey in «The Battle of Pleasant Hill.»

However gallant the Confederate fighting at Mansfield, it could not stem the tide of military defeat. Most of French Louisiana remained in Federal hands until the Confederate collapse in May 1865. Appomatox signalled both the end of what had been an era of opulence for a few, and of struggle for survival for many, and the beginning of a period in which accelerated social changes would transform the culture of French Louisiana – Creole, Acadian and black.

Mathé Allain
Carl A. Brasseaux

FROM SUBJECTS TO CITIZENS

By George W. Cable

New Orleans had been under the actual sway of the Spaniard for thirty-four years. Ten thousand inhabitants were gathered in and about its walls. Most of the whites were Creoles. Even in the province at large these were three in every four. Immigrants from Malaga, the Canaries, and Nova Scotia had passed on through the town and into the rural districts. Of the thousands of Americans, only a few scores of mercantile pioneers came as far as the town – sometimes with families, but generally without. Free trade with France had brought some French merchants and the Reign of Terror had driven here a few royalists. The town had filled and overflowed its original boundaries. From the mast-head of a ship in the harbor one looked down upon a gathering of from twelve hundred to fourteen hundred dwellings and stores, or say four thousand roofs – to such an extent did slavery multiply outhouses. They were of many kinds, covered with half-cylindrical or with flat tiles, with shingles, or with slates, and showed an endless variety in height and in bright confusion of color and form – verandas and balconies, dormer windows, lattices and belvederes. Under the river bank, «within ten steps of Tchoupitoulas street,» where land has since formed and been covered with brick stores for several squares, the fleets of barges and flat-boats from the West moored and unloaded, or retailed their contents at the water's edge. Farther down, immediately abreast of the town, between the upper limits and the Place d'Armes, lay the shipping – twenty or more vessels of from 100 to 200 tons burden, hauled close against the bank. Still farther on, beyond the Government warehouses, was the mooring-place of the vessels of war. Looking down into the streets–Toulouse, St. Peter, Conti, St. Louis, Royale, Chartres – one caught the brisk movements of a commercial port. They were straight, and fairly spacious, for the times; but unpaved, ill-drained, filthy, poorly lighted, and often impassable for the mire.

The town was fast becoming one of the chief sea-ports of America. Already, in 1802, 158 American merchantmen, 104 Spanish, and 3 French, registering 31,241 tons, had sailed from her harbor, loaded. The incoming tonnage for 1803 promised an increase of over 37 per cent. It exported of the products of the province alone over $2,000,000 value. Its imports reached $2,500,000. Thirty-four thousand bales of cotton; 4500 hogsheads of sugar; 800 casks – equivalent to 2,000 barrels – of molasses; rice, peltries, indigo, lumber, and sundries, to the value of $500,000; 50,000 barrels of flour; 3000 barrels of beef and pork; 2000 hogsheads of tobacco; and smaller quantities of corn, butter, hams, meal, lard, beans, hides, staves, and cordage, had passed in 1802 across its famous levee.

Everywhere the restless American was

conspicuous, and, with the Englishman and the Irishman, composed the majority of the commercial class. The French, except a few, had subsided into the retail trade or the mechanical callings. The Spaniards not in military or civil service were generally humble Catalans, keepers of shops, and of the low cabarets that occupied almost every street corner. The Creole was on every side, – handsome, proud, illiterate, elegant in manner, slow, a seeker of office and military commission, ruling society with fierce exclusiveness, looking upon toil as the slave's proper badge, lending money now at twelve and now at twenty-four per cent., and taking but a secondary and unsympathetic part in the commercial life from which was springing the future greatness of his town. What could he do? The American filled the upper Mississippi valley. England and the Atlantic States, no longer France and Spain, took its products and supplied its wants. The Anglo-Saxon and the Irishman held every advantage; and, ill-equipped and uncommercial, the Creole was fortunate to secure even a third or fourth mercantile rank in the city of his birth. But he had one stronghold. He owned the urban and suburban real estate, and presently took high rank as the seller of lots and as a *rentier*. The confiscated plantations of the Jesuits had been, or were being, gradually laid out in streets. From 1801, when Faubourg St. Mary contained only five houses, it had grown with great rapidity.

Other faubourgs were about springing up. The high roofs of the aristocratic suburb St. Jean could be seen stretching away among their groves of evergreen along the Bayou road, and clustering presently into a village near where a «Bayou bridge» still crosses the stream, some two hundred yards below the site of the old one. Here gathered the larger craft of the lake trade, while the smaller still pushed its way up Carondelet's shoaled and neglected, yet busy canal.

Outwardly the Creoles of the Delta had become a graceful, well-knit race, in full keeping with the freedom of their surroundings. Their complexion lacked color, but it was free from the sallowness of the Indies. There was a much larger proportion of blondes among them than is commonly supposed. Generally their hair was of a chestnut, or but little deeper tint, except that in the city a Spanish tincture now and then asserted itself in black hair and eyes. The women were fair, symmetrical, with pleasing features, lively, expressive eyes, well-rounded throats, and superb hair; vivacious, decorous, exceedingly tasteful in dress, adorning themselves with superior effect in draperies of muslin enriched with embroideries and much garniture of lace, but with a more moderate display of jewels, which indicated a community of limited wealth. They were much superior to the men in quickness of wit, and excelled them in amiability and in many other good qualities. The more pronounced faults of the men were generally those moral provincialisms which travelers recount with undue impatience. They are said to have been coarse, boastful, vain; and they were, also, deficient in energy and application, without well-directed ambition, unskillful in handicraft – doubtless through negligence only – and totally wanting in that community feeling which begets the study of reciprocal rights and obligations, and reveals the individual's advantage in the promotion of the common interest. Hence, the Creoles were fonder of pleasant fictions regarding the salubrity, beauty, good order, and advantages of their town, than of measures to justify their assumptions. With African slavery they were, of course, licentious, and they were always ready for the dueling-ground; yet it need not seem surprising that a people so beset by evil influences from every direction were generally unconscious of a reprehensible state of affairs, and preserved their self-respect and a proud belief in their moral excellence. Easily inflamed, they were as easily discouraged, thrown into confusion, and overpowered, and they expended the best of their energies in trivial pleasures, especially the masque and the dance; yet they were kind parents, affectionate wives, tractable children, and enthusiastic patriots.

Little wonder that it is said the Creoles wept as they stood on the Place d'Armes and saw the standard of a people, whose national existence was a mere twenty-years' experiment, taking the place of that tricolor on which perched the glory of a regenerated France. On that very spot some of them had taken part in the armed repudiation of the first cession. The two attitudes and the two events differed alike. The earlier transfer had come loaded with drawbacks and tyrannous exactions; the latter came freighted with long-coveted benefits and with some of the dearest rights of man. This second, therefore, might bring tears of tender regret; it might force the Creole into civil and political fellowship with the detested *Américain*; but it could not rouse the sense of outrage produced by the cession to Spain. O'Reilly, the Spanish Captain-General, had established a government whose only excellence lay in its strength; Claiborne came to set up a power whose only strength lay in its excellence. His task was difficult mainly because it was to be done among a people distempered by the earlier rule, and diligently wrought upon by intriguing Frenchmen and Spanish officials. His wisest measures, equally with his broadest mistakes, were wordily resented. His ignorance of the French language, his large official powers, Wilkinson's bad habits, a scarcity of money, the introduction of the English tongue, and of a just proportion of American appointees into the new courts and public offices, the use of bayonets to suppress disorder at public balls, a supposed partiality for Americans in court, the personal character of officials, the formation of American militia companies and their parades in the streets – all alike fed the flames of the Creoles' vehement indignation.

In March, 1804, Congress passed an act dividing the province into two parts on the present northern boundary of Louisiana, giving each a distinct government, and to the lower the title of the territory of Orleans. This act, which was to take effect the following October, interdicted the slave-trade. Then, indeed, anger burned. Insurrectionary sentiments were placarded on the street corners, crowds copied them, and public officers attempting to remove them were driven away. But that was all. Claiborne – young, like Bienville and like Galvez, but benevolent, wise, and patient – soon saw it was not the Government, but only some of its measures, that caused so much heat. The merchants, who in 1768 had incited revolt against legalized ruin, saw, now, on the other hand, that American rule had lifted them out of commercial serfdom, and that, as a port of the United States, and only as such, their crescent city could enter upon the great future which was hers by her geographical position. But we have seen that the merchants were not principally Creoles.

Although the Creoles looked for a French or Spanish re-cession, yet both interest and probability were so plainly against it that they were presently demanding impatiently, if not imperiously, the rights of American citizens as pledged to them in the treaty. They made no appeal to that France which had a second time cast them off; but at three public meetings, in June and July, petitioned Congress not to rescind the cession but to leave Louisiana undivided, and so hasten their admission into the Union. This appeal was fruitless, and the territorial government went into operation, Claiborne being retained as governor. The partition, the presidential appointment of a legislative council instead of its election by the people, the nullification of certain Spanish land-grants, and an official reinspection of all titles, were accepted, if not with patience, at least with that grace which the Creole assumes before the inevitable. But his respect was not always forthcoming toward laws that could be opposed or evaded. «This city,» wrote Claiborne, «requires a strict police: the inhabitants are of various descriptions; many highly respectable, and some of them very degenerate.» A sheriff and posse attempted to arrest a Spanish officer. Two hundred men interfered; swords were drawn, and resistance ceased only when a detachment of United States troops were seen hurrying to the rescue. Above all, the slave-trade – «all-important to the existence of the country» – was diligently plied through the lakes and the inlets of Barataria.

The winter of 1804-05 was freer from bickerings than the last had been. The intrigues of Spanish officials who lingered in the district were unavailable, and the Governor reported a gratifying state of order. On the 2d of March, with many unwelcome safeguards and limitations, the right was accorded the people to elect a House of Representatives, and «to form for themselves a constitution and State government so soon as the free population of the territory should reach sixty thousand souls, in order to be admitted into the Union.»

For a time following there was feverishness rather than events. Great Britain and Spain were at war; Havana was open to neutral vessels; the commerce of New Orleans was stimulated. But the pertinacious lingering of Casa-Calvo, Morales, and others, – whom Claiborne at last had to force away in February, 1806, – the rumors they kept alive, the fear of war with Spain, doubts as to how the Creoles would or should stand, party strife among the Americans in New Orleans, and a fierce quarrel in the Church between the vicar-general and the famed Père Antoine, pastor of the cathedral, kept the public mind in a perpetual ferment. Still, in all these things there was only restiveness and discord, not revolution. The Creoles had at length undergone their last transplanting, and taken root in American privileges and principles. From the guilt of the plot whose events were now impending the Creole's hand is clean. We have Claiborne's testimony:

> «Were it not for the calumnies of some Frenchmen who are among us, and the intrigues of a few ambitious, unprincipled men whose native language is English, I do believe that the Louisianians would be very soon the most zealous and faithful members of our republic.»

On the 4th of November, 1811, a convention elected by the people of Orleans Territory met in New Orleans, and on the 28th of the following January adopted a State constitution; and on the 30th of April, 1812, Louisiana entered the Union.

On one of those summer evenings when the Creoles, in the early years of the century, were wont to seek the river air in domestic and social groups under the willow and china trees of their levee, there glided around the last bend of the Mississippi above New Orleans «an elegant barge,» equipped with sails and colors, and impelled by the stroke of ten picked oarsmen. It came down the harbor, drew in to the bank, and presently set ashore a small, slender, extremely handsome man, its only passenger. He bore letters from General Wilkinson, introducing him in New Orleans, and one, especially, to Daniel Clark, Wilkinson's agent, stating that «this great and honorable man would communicate to him many things improper to letter, and which he would not say to any other.» Claiborne, the young Virginian whom President Jefferson had made Governor of Louisiana, wrote to Secretary Madison, «Colonel Burr arrived in this city on this evening.»

The date was June 26, 1805. The distinguished visitor, a day or two later, sat down to a banquet given to him by the unsuspecting Governor. He was now in full downward career. Only a few years before, he had failed of the presidency by but one electoral vote. Only a few months had passed since, on completing his term, he had vacated the vice-presidency. In the last year of that term Alexander Hamilton had fallen by his hand. Friends and power, both, were lost. But he yet had strength in the West. Its people were still wild, restless, and eager for adventure. The conquest of «Orleans» was a traditional idea. Its banks were full of specie. Clouds of revolution were gathering all around the Gulf. The regions beyond the Red and Sabine rivers invited conquest. The earlier schemes of Adams and Hamilton, to seize Orleans Island and the Floridas for the United States; that of Miranda, to expel the Spanish power from the farther shores of the Gulf; the plottings of Wilkinson, to surrender the West into the hands of Spain – all these abandoned projects seem to have cast their shadows on the mind of Burr and colored his designs.

The stern patriotism of the older States had weighed him in its balances and rejected him. He had turned with a vagueness of plan that waited for clearer definition on the chances of the future, and, pledged to no principle, had set out in quest of aggrandizement and empire, either on the Mississippi or among the civilizations that encircle the Gulf of Mexico, as the turn of events might decree. In the West he had met Wilkinson, and was now in correspondence with him.

The Governor who had feasted him moved much in the gay society of the Creoles. It was not giddiness, but anxious thought and care that pushed him into such scenes. Troubles and afflictions marked his footsteps; his wife and child stricken down by yellow fever, her young brother-in-law rashly championing him against the sneers of his enemies, fallen in a duel – but it was necessary to avoid the error – Ulloa's earlier error – of self-isolation. He wisely studied the social side of the people, and so viewed public questions from behind.

The question ever before him – which he was incessantly asking himself, and which he showed an almost morbid wish to be always answering to the heads of departments at Washington – was whether the Creoles over whom he was set to rule were loyal to the government of the nation. It was a vital question. The bonds of the Union, even outside of Louisiana, were as yet slender and frail. The whole Mississippi valley was full of designing adventurers, suspected and unsuspected, ready to reap any advantage whatever of any disaffection of the people. He knew there were such in New Orleans.

The difficulty of answering this question lay in one single, broad difference between Claiborne himself and the civilization which he had been sent to reconstruct into harmony with North American thought and action. With him loyalty to the state meant obedience to its laws. The Creole had never been taught that there was any necessary connection between the two. The Governor's young Virginian spirit assumed it as self-evident that a man would either keep the laws or overturn them. It was a strange state of society to him, where one could be a patriot and yet ignore, evade, and override the laws. «Occasionally, in conversation with ladies,» – so he writes –

> «I have denounced smuggling as dishonest, and very generally a reply, in substance as follows, would be returned: 'That is impossible, for my grandfather, or my father, or my husband was, under the Spanish Government, a great smuggler, and he was always esteemed an honest man.'»

They might have added, «and loyal to the king.»

With some men Claiborne had had no trouble. «A beginning must be made,» said Poydras, a wealthy and benevolent Frenchman; «we must be initiated into the sacred duties of freemen and the practices of liberty.» But the mass, both high and low, saw in the abandonment of smuggling or of the slave-trade only a surrender of existence – an existence to which their own consciences and the ladies at the ball gave them a clean patent. These, by their angry obduracy, harassed their governor with ungrounded fears of sedition.

In fact, the issue before governor and people was one to which the question of fealty to government was quite subordinate. It was the struggle of a North American against a Spanish American civilization. Burr must have seen this; and probably at this date there was nothing clearly and absolutely fixed in his mind but this, that the former civilization had cast him off, and that he was about to offer himself to the latter. Now events were to answer the Governor's haunting question, and to give a new phase to the struggle between these two civilizations in the Mississippi valley.

Colonel Burr remained in New Orleans ten or twelve days, receiving much social attention, and then left for St. Louis, saying he would return in October. But he did not appear.

During the winter the question of boundaries threatened war with Spain, and the anger of Spain rose high when, in February, 1806, Claiborne expelled Casa Calvo and Morales, her agents, from the territory. Her governor stopped the transmission of the United States mails through Florida. Ouside, the Spaniards threatened; inside, certain Americans of influence did hardly less. The Creoles were again supine. Père Antoine, the beloved pastor of the cathedral, was suspected – unjustly – of sedition; Wilkinson with his forces was unaccountably idle. «All is not right,» wrote Claiborne; «I know not whom to censure; but it seems to me that there is wrong somewhere.»

The strange character of the Creole people perplexed and wearied Claiborne. Unstable and whimsical, public-spirited and sordid by turns, a display of their patriotism caused a certain day to be «among the happiest of his life»; and when autumn passed and toward its close their enthusiasm disappeared in the passion for money-getting, he «began to despair.» But, alike unknown in the Creole town – to money-getters and to patriots – the only real danger had passed. Wilkinson had decided to betray Burr.

Late in September the General had arrived at Natchitoches, and had taken chief command of the troops confronting the Spanish forces. On the 8th of October, one Samuel Swartwout brought him a confidential letter from Colonel Burr. He was received by Wilkinson with much attention, stayed eight days, and then left for New Orleans. On the 21st, Wilkinson determined to expose the plot. He dispatched a messenger to the President of the United States, bearing a letter which apprised him of Colonel Burr's contemplated descent of the Mississippi with an armed force. Eight days later, the General arranged with the Spaniards for the troops under each flag to withdraw from the contested boundary, leaving its location to be settled by the two governments, and hastened toward New Orleans, hurrying on in advance of him a force of artificers and a company of soldiers.

Presently the people of New Orleans were startled from apathetic tranquillity into a state of panic. All unexplained, these troops had arrived, others had reënforced them; there was hurried repair and preparation; and the air was agitated with rumors. To Claiborne, the revelation had at length come from various directions that Aaron Burr was plotting treason. Thousands were said to be involved with him; the first outbreak was expected to be in New Orleans.

Wilkinson had arrived in the town. In the bombastic style of one who plays a part, he demanded of Claiborne the proclamation of martial law. Claiborne kindly, and with expressions of confidence in the General, refused; but the two met the city's chamber of commerce, laid the plot before it, and explained the needs of defense. Several thousand dollars were at once subscribed, and a transient embargo of the port recommended, for the purpose of procuring sailors for the four gun-boats and two bomb-ketches lying in the harbor.

There were others in whose confidence Wilkinson held no place. The acting-governor of Mississippi wrote to Claiborne:

> «Should he [Colonel Burr] pass us, your fate will depend on the General, not on the Colonel. If I stop Burr, this may hold the General in his allegiance to the United States. But if Burr passes the territory with two thousand men, I have no doubt but the General will be your worst enemy. Be on your guard against the wily General. He is not much better than Catiline. Consider him a traitor and act as if certain thereof. You may save yourself by it.»

On Sunday, the 14th of December, a Dr. Erick Bollman was arrested by Wilkinson's order. Swartwout and one Ogden had already been apprehended at Fort Adams, and were then confined on one of the bomb-ketches in the harbor. On the 16th, a court-officer, armed with writs of ***habeas corpus***, sought in vain to hire a boat to carry him off to the bomb-ketch, and on the next day, when one could be procured, only Ogden could be found.

He was liberated, but only to be re-arrested with one Alexander, and held in the face of the ***habeas corpus***. The court issued an attachment against Wilkinson. It was powerless. The Judge – Workman – appealed to Claiborne to sustain it with force. The Governor promptly declined, the Judge resigned, and Wilkinson ruled.

One of Burr's intimates was General Adair. On the 14th of January, 1807, he appeared in New Orleans unannounced. Colonel Burr, he said, with only a servant, would arrive in a few days. As he was sitting at dinner, his hotel was surrounded by regulars, an aide of Wilkinson appeared and arrested him; he was confined, and presently was sent away. The troops beat to arms, regulars and militia paraded through the terrified city, and Judge Workman, with two others, were thrown into confinement. They were released within twenty-four hours; but to intensify the general alarm, four hundred Spaniards from Pensacola arrived at the mouth of Bayou St. John, a few miles from the city, on their way to Baton Rouge, and their commander asked of Claiborne that he and his staff might pass through New Orleans. He was refused the liberty.

All this time the Creoles had been silent.

Now, however, through their legislature, they addressed their governor. They washed their hands of the treason which threatened the peace and safety of Louisiana, but boldly announced their intention to investigate the «extraordinary measures» of Wilkinson and to complain to Congress.

Burr, meanwhile, with the mere nucleus of a force, had set his expedition in motion, and at length, after twenty years' threatening by the Americans of the West, a fleet of boats actually bore an armed expedition down the Ohio and out into the Mississippi, bent on conquest.

But disaster lay in wait for it. It failed to gather weight as it came, and on the 28th of January the news reached New Orleans that Burr, having arrived at a point near Natchez with fourteen boats and about a hundred men, had been met by Mississippi militia, arrested, taken to Natchez, and released on bond to appear for trial at the next term of the Territorial Court.

This bond Burr ignored, and left the Territory. The Governor of Mississippi offered $2000 for his apprehension, and on the 3d of March the welcome word came to New Orleans that he had been detected in disguise and re-arrested at Fort Stoddart, Alabama.

About the middle of May, Wilkinson sailed from New Orleans to Virginia to testify in that noted trial which, though it did not end in the conviction of Burr, made final wreck of his designs, restored public tranquillity, and assured the country of the loyalty not only of the West, but also of the Creoles of Louisiana. The struggle between the two civilizations withdrew finally into the narrowest limits of the Delta, and Spanish American thought found its next and last exponent in an individual without the ambition of empire, – a man polished, brave, and chivalrous; a patriot, and yet a contrabandist; an outlaw, and in the end a pirate.

BALL ROOM BRAWLS

W.C.C. CLAIBORNE TO JAMES MADISON
Jan. 31, 1804

I am sorry to inform you that a few of the French Officers and Citizens who are here, continue to evidence a disorderly disposition; they are mortified at the loss of this delightful Country and seem to foster great hatred to the *Americans* who are here;– Among *these* (the Americans) there are also some warm and imprudent young Men, and I can assure your Sir, that it requires much address and prudence to preserve the Harmony of the City.

Some unpleasant Diplomatic Letters have passed between M. Laussat and the American Commissioners, upon the disorderly conduct of some of the French Officers which he denies, and charges it to the Americans. Copies of these Letters will be transmitted to you. I have reason however, to hope that no further disturbances will ensue. Every thing is at present tranquil, and the most perfect good understanding apparently exists between the Natives of the United States, and those of Louisiana.

The Public Ball room has been the Theatre of all this Disorder. During the Winter Season, there has for many years been a Ball twice a week. Every white Male Visits it who will pay at the door 50 cents, and the Ladies of every Rank attend these assemblies in great numbers. The Consequence is that the company is generally composed of a very heterogenous Mass. To keep order at these Balls (under the Spanish Government) a Strong guard was Stationed at the Ball room, and on the first appearance of disorder the persons concerned were committed.

On my arrival at New Orleans, I found the people very Solicitous to maintain their Public Ball establishment, and to convince them that the American Government felt no disposition to break in upon their amusements (as had been reported by some mischievous persons) General Wilkinson and myself occasionally attended these assemblies.

Under the Spanish Government, the Governor General was the Regulator of the Balls, but this Gallant duty I have cheerfully surrendered to the Municipality of the City. I fear you will suppose that I am wanting in respect in calling your attention to the Balls of New Orleans, but I do assure you, Sir, that they occupy much of the Public mind, and from them have proceeded the greatest embarrassments which have heretofore attended my administration.[1]

Accept assurances of my great respect and high consideration.

(Signed) Wm. C.C. Claiborne

NOTE

1. These balls were an important part of the social life of the French and Spanish rule in Louisiana. New Orleans of to-day is famous for its beautiful, enjoyable balls.

PEACE AND HARMONY?

By W. C. C. Claiborne

New Orleans December 31st 1804

Sir,

I have never witnessed more good order than at present pervades this City; and as far as I can learn the whole Territory. – I discover also with great pleasure the existence of a friendly understanding between the Modern and the Ancient Louisianians. The Winter amusements have commenced for several Weeks; – the two description of Citizens meet frequently at the Theatre, Balls, and other places of Amusement, and pass their time in perfect harmony.

NEW ORLEANS IN 1838

By Harriet Martineau

The gay visiting season at New Orleans was over before we arrived, but we were in several parties. The division between the American and French factions is visible even in the drawing-room. The French complain that the Americans will not speak French; will not meet their neighbours even half way in accommodation of speech. The Americans ridicule the toilet practices of the French ladies; their liberal use of rouge and pearl powder. If the French ladies do thus beautify themselves, they do it with great art. I could not be quite sure of the fact in any one instance while I am disposed to believe it from the clumsy imitation of the art which I saw in the countenance of an American rival or two. I beheld with strong disgust the efforts of a young lady from Philadelphia to make herself as French as possible by these disagreeable means. She was under twenty, and would have been rather pretty if she had given herself a fair chance; but her coarsely-painted eyebrows, daubed cheeks, and powdered throat inspired a disgust which she must be singularly unwise not to have anticipated. If this were a single case it would not be worth mentioning; but I was told by a resident that it is a common practice for young ladies to paint both white and red, under the idea of accommodating themselves to the French manners of the place. They had better do it by practising the French language than by copying the French toilet. New Orleans is the only place in the United States where I am aware of having seen a particle of rouge.

Large parties are much alike everywhere, and they leave no very distinct impression. Except for the mixture of languages, and the ample provision of ices, fans, and ventilators, the drawing-room assemblages of New Orleans bear a strong resemblance to the routs and dinner-parties of a country town in England. Our pleasantest days in the great Southern city were those which we spent quietly in the homes of intimate acquaintances. I vividly remember one which I was told was a true Louisiana day. We ladies carried our workbags, and issued forth by eleven o'clock, calling by the way for a friend, Ailsie's mistress. The house we were to visit was a small shaded dwelling, with glass doors opening into a pretty garden. In a cool parlour we sat at work, talking of things solemn and trivial, of affairs native and foreign, till dinner, which was at two. We were then joined by the gentlemen. We left the dinner-table early, and the gentlemen trundled rocking-chairs and low stools into the garden, where we sat in the shade all the afternoon, the ladies working, the gentlemen singing Irish melodies, telling good native stories, and throwing us all into such a merry mood, that we positively refused the siesta which we were urged to take, and forgot what a retribution we might expect from the moschetoes for sitting so long under the trees.

After tea we got to the piano, and were reminded at last by the darkness of the number of hours which this delightful Louisiana visit had consumed. We all walked home together through the quiet streets, the summer lightning quivering through the thick trees in singular contrast with the steady moonlight.

FRENCH IMMIGRATION AND THE BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS

By George W. Cable

Between 1804 and 1810, New Orleans doubled its population. The common notion is that there was a large influx of Americans. This was not the case. A careful estimate shows not more than 3100 of these in the city in 1809, yet in the following year the whole population, including the suburbs, was 24,552. The Americans, therefore, were numerically feeble. The increase came from another direction.

Napoleon's wars were convulsing Europe. The navies of his enemies fell upon the French West Indies. In Cuba large numbers of white and mulatto refugees who, in the St. Domingan insurrection, had escaped across to Cuba with their slaves, were now, by hostilities between France and Spain, forced again to become exiles. Within sixty days, between May and July, 1809, thirty-four vessels from Cuba set ashore in the streets of New Orleans nearly fifty-eight hundred persons, – whites, free mulattoes, and black slaves in almost equal numbers. Others came later, from Cuba, Guadaloupe, and other islands, until they amounted to ten thousand. Nearly all settled permanently in New Orleans.

The Creoles of Louisiana received the Creoles of the West Indies with tender welcomes. The state of society in the islands from which these had come needs no description. As late as 1871, '72, and '73, there were in the island of Guadaloupe only three marriages to a thousand inhabitants. But they came to their better cousins with the ties of a common religion, a common tongue, much common sentiment, misfortunes that may have had some resemblance, and with the poetry of exile. They were reënforcements, too, at a moment when the power of the Americans – few in number, but potent in energies and advantages – was looked upon with hot jealousy.

The Americans clamored against them, for they came in swarms. They brought little money or goods. They raised the price of bread and of rent. They lowered morals and disturbed order. Yet it was certainly true the Americans had done little to improve either of these. Some had come to stay; many more to make a fortune and get away; both sorts were simply and only seeking wealth.

The West Indians had not come to a city whose civilization could afford to absorb them. The Creole element needed a better infusion, and yet it was probably the best in the community. The Spaniards were few and bad, described by one as capable of the vilest depredations, «a nuisance to the country,» and even by the mild Claiborne as «for the most part * * * well suited for mischievous and wicked enterprises.» The free people of color were about two thousand, unaspiring, corrupted, and feeble. The floating population was extremely bad. Sailors from all parts of the world took sides, according to nationality, in bloody street riots and night brawls; and bargemen, flat-boatmen, and raftsmen, from the wild banks of the Ohio, Tennessee, and Cumberland, abandoned themselves at the end of their journey to the most shameful and reckless excesses. The spirit of strife ran up into the better classes. A newspaper article reflecting upon Napoleon all but caused a riot. A public uprising was hardly prevented when three young navy officers released a slave girl who was being whipped. In September, 1807, occurred the «batture riots.» The *batture* was the sandy deposits made by the Mississippi in front of the Faubourg St. Marie. The noted jurist, Edward Livingston, representing private claimants, took possession of this ground, and was opposed by the public in two distinct outbreaks. In the second, the Creoles, ignoring the decision of the Supreme Court, rallied to the spot by thousands, and were quieted only by the patient appeals of Claiborne, addressed to them on the spot, and by the recommittal of the contest to the United States Courts, in whose annals it is so well-known a cause. Preparations for war with Spain heightened the general fever. Claiborne's letters dwell on the sad mixture of society. «England,» he writes, «has her partisans; Ferdinand the Seventh, some faithful subjects; Bonaparte, his admirers; and there is a fourth description of men, commonly called *Burrites,* who would join any standard which would promise rapine and plunder.» These last had a newspaper, «La Lanterne Magique,» whose libels gave the executive much anxiety.

Now, into such a city – say of fourteen thousand inhabitants, at most – swarm ten thousand white, yellow, and black West India islanders; some with means, others in absolute destitution, and «many * * * of doubtful character and desperate fortune.» Americans, English, Spanish, cry aloud; the laws forbid the importation of slaves; Claiborne adjures the American consuls at Havana and Santiago de Cuba to stop the movement; the free people of color are ordered point-blank to leave the country; the actual effort is made to put the order into execution; and still all three classes continue to pour into the streets, to throw themselves upon the town's hospitality, and daily to increase the cost of living and the number of distressed poor.

They came and they staid, all too readily dissolving into the corresponding parts of the native Creole community, and it is easier to underestimate than to exaggerate the silent results of an event that gave the French-speaking Louisianians twice the numerical power with which they had begun to wage their long battle against American absorption.

The whole Gulf coast of Louisiana is an immense, wet, level expanse, covered everywhere, shoulder-high, with marsh-grasses, and indented by extensive bays that receive the rivers and larger bayous. For some sixty miles on either side of the Mississippi's mouth, it breaks into a grotesquely contorted shoreline and into bright archipelagoes of hundreds of small, reedy islands, with narrow and obscure channels writhing hither and thither between them. These mysterious passages, hidden from the eye that overglances the seemingly unbroken sunny leagues of surrounding distance, are threaded only by the far-seen white or red lateen-sail of the oyster-gatherer, or by the pirogue of the hunter stealing upon the myriads of wild fowl that in winter haunt these vast green wastes.

To such are known the courses that enable them to avoid the frequent *culs-de-sac* of the devious shore, and that lead to the bayous which open the way to the inhabited interior. They lead through miles of clear, brown, silent waters, between low banks fringed with dwarf oaks, across pale distances of «quaking prairie,» and at length, under the solemn shades of cypress swamps, to the near neighborhood of the Mississippi, from whose flood the process of delta-growth has cut the bayou off. Across the mouths of the frequent bays that indent this marshy coast-line stretch long, slender keys of dazzling, storm-heaped sand – sometimes of cultivable soil.

About sixty miles south from the bank of the Mississippi, opposite New Orleans, lies Grande Terre, a very small island of this class, scarce two miles long, and a fourth as wide, stretching across two-thirds of the entrance of Barataria Bay, but leaving a pass of about a mile width at its western end, with a navigable channel. Behind this island the waters of the bay give a safe, deep harbor. At the west of the bay lies a multitude of small, fenny islands, interwoven with lakes, bays, and passes, named and unnamed, affording cunning exit to the bayous La Fourche and Terre Bonne and the waters still beyond. Northward the bay extends some sixteen miles, and then breaks in every direction into lakes and bayous. Through one of these – the bayou Barataria, with various other local names – a way opens irregularly northward. Now and then it widens into a lake, and narrows again, each time more than the last, until near its head a short canal is entered on the left, and six miles farther on you are stopped abruptly by the levee of the Mississippi. You mount its crown, and see opposite the low-lying city, with its spires peering up from the sunken plain; its few wreaths of manufactory smoke, and the silent stir of its winding harbor. Canal street, its former upper boundary, is hidden two miles and a half away down the stream. There are other Baratarian routes, through lakes Salvador or Des Allemands, and many obscure avenues of return toward the Gulf of Mexico or the maze of wet lands intervening.

In the first decade of the century the wars of France had filled this gulf with her privateers. Spain's rich commerce was the prey around which they hovered, and Guadaloupe and Martinique their island haunts. From these the English, operating in the West Indies, drove them out, and when in February, 1810, Guadaloupe completed the list of their conquests, the French privateers were as homeless as Noah's raven.

They were exiled on the open Gulf, with the Spaniards lining its every shore, except one, where American neutrality motioned them austerely away. This was Louisiana. But this, of all shores, suited them best. Thousands of their brethren already filled the streets of New Orleans, and commanded the sympathies of the native Creoles. The tangled water-ways of Barataria, so well known to smugglers and slavers, and to so few beside, leading by countless windings and intersections to the markets of the thriving city, offered the rarest facilities for their purposes. Between this shelter and the distant harbors of France there could be no question of choice.

Hither they came, fortified Grande Terre, built store-houses, sailed away upon the Gulf, and re-appeared with prizes which it seems were not always Spanish. The most seductive auctions followed. All along this coast there are high, probably natural, heaps of a species of small clam-shell. The aborigines, mound-builders, used them for temple-sites. A notable group of these mounds on one of the islands of Barataria became the privateers' chief place of sale and barter. There was no scarcity of buyers from New Orleans and the surrounding country. Goods were also smuggled up the various bayous, especially La Fourche. Then the captured vessels were burned or refitted, sails were spread again and prows were pointed toward the Spanish Main. The Baratarians had virtually revived, in miniature, the life of the long-extinct buccaneers.

Their fame spread far and wide; and while in neighboring States the scandalous openness of their traffic brought loud condemnation upon Louisiana citizens and officials alike, the merchants and planters of the Delta, profiting by these practices, with the general public as well, screened the contrabandists and defended their character.

Much ink has been spilled from that day to this to maintain that they sailed under letters of marque. But certainly no commission could be worth the unrolling when carried by men who had removed themselves beyond all the restraints that even seem to distinguish privateering from piracy. They were often overstocked with vessels and booty, but they seem never to have been embarrassed with the care of prisoners.

There lived at this time, in New Orleans, John and Pierre Lafitte. John, the younger, but more conspicuous of the two, was a handsome man, fair, with black hair and eyes, wearing his beard, as the fashion was, shaven neatly back from the front of his face. His manner was generally courteous, though he was irascible and in graver moments somewhat harsh. He spoke fluently English, Spanish, Italian, and French, using them with much affability at the hotel where he resided, and indicating, in the peculiarities of his French, his nativity in the city of Bordeaux.

The elder brother was a sea-faring man and had served in the French navy. He appears to have been every way less showy than the other; but beyond doubt both men were above the occupation with which they began life in Louisiana. This was the trade of blacksmith, though at their forge, on the corner of St. Philip and Bourbon streets, probably none but slave hands swung the sledge or shaped the horseshoe.

It was during the embargo, enforced by the United States Government in 1808, that John Lafitte began to be a merchant. His store was in Royal street, where, behind a show of legitimate trade, he was busy running the embargo with goods and Africans. He wore the disguise carelessly. He was cool and intrepid and had only the courts to evade, and his unlawful adventures did not lift his name from the published lists of managers of society balls or break his acquaintance with prominent legislators.

In 1810 came the West Indian refugees and the Guadalupian privateers. The struggle between the North American and the West Indian ideas of public order and morals took new energy on the moment. The plans of the «set of bandits who infested the coast and overran the country» were described by Government as «extensive and well laid,» and the confession made that «so general seemed the disposition to aid in their concealment, that but faint hopes were entertained of detecting the parties and bringing them to justice.»

Their trade was impudently open. Merchants gave and took orders for their goods in the streets of the town as frankly as for the merchandise of Philadelphia or New York. Frequent seizures lent zest to adventure without greatly impairing the extravagant profits of a commerce that paid neither duties nor first cost.

John and Pierre Lafitte became the commercial agents of the «privateers.» By and by they were their actual chiefs. They won great prosperity for the band; prizes were rich and frequent, and slave cargoes profitable. John Lafitte did not at this time go to sea. He equipped vessels, sent them on their cruises, sold their prizes and slaves, and moved hither and thither throughout the Delta, administering affairs with boldness and sagacity. The Mississippi's «coasts» in the parishes of St. James and St. John the Baptist were often astir with his known presence, and his smaller vessels sometimes pierced the interior as far as Lac des Allemands. He knew the value of popular admiration, and was often at country balls, where he enjoyed the fame of great riches and courage, and seduced many of the simple Acadian youth to sail in his cruises. His two principal captains were Beluche and Dominique You. «Captain Dominique» was small, graceful, fair, of a pleasant, even attractive face, and a skillful sailor. There were also Gambi, a handsome Italian, who died only a few years ago at the old pirate village of Chenière Caminada; and Rigoult, a dark Frenchman, whose ancient house still stands on Grande Isle, the island next to Grande Terre on the west. And yet again Johnness and Johannot, unless – which appears likely – these were only the real names of Dominique and Beluche.

Expeditions went out against these men more than once; but the Government was preoccupied and embarrassed and the expeditions seemed feebly conceived. They only harassed the Baratarians, drove them to the mouth of La Fourche in vessels too well armed to be attacked in transports, and did not prevent their prompt return to Grande Terre.

The revolution for the independence of the Colombian States of South America began. Venezuela declared her independence in July, 1811. The Baratarians procured letters of marque from the patriots in Carthagena, lowered the French flag, ran up the new standard, and thus far and no farther joined the precarious fortunes of the new states, while Barataria continued to be their haunt and booty their only object.

They reached the height of their fortune in 1813. Their moral condition had declined in proportion. «Among them,» says the Governor, «are some St. Domingo negroes of the most desperate character, and no worse than most of their white associates.» Their avowed purpose, he says, was to cruise on the high seas and commit «depredations and piracies on the vessels of nations in peace with the United States.»

One of these nations was the British. Its merchantmen were captured in the Gulf and sold behind Grande Terre. The English more than once sought redress with their own powder and shot. On the 23d of June, 1813, a British sloop-of-war anchored off the outer end of the channel at the mouth of La Fourche and sent her boats to attack two privateers lying under the lee of Cat Island; but the pirates stood ground and repulsed them with considerable loss.

Spain, England, and the United States were now their enemies; yet they grew bolder and more outrageous. Smuggling increased. The Government was «set at defiance in broad daylight.» «I remember,» reads a manuscript kindly furnished the present writer, «when three Spanish vessels were brought in to Caillou Islands. They were laden with a certain Spanish wine, and the citizens of Attakapas went out to see them and purchased part of the captured cargoes. There were no traces of the former crews.»

In October, 1813, a revenue officer seized some contraband goods near New Orleans. He was fired upon by a party under John Lafitte, one of his men wounded, and the goods taken from him. The Governor offered $500 for Lafitte's apprehension, but without avail.

The shell-mound where the Baratarians

held their sales was called «the Temple.» In January, 1814, four hundred and fifteen negroes, consigned to John and Pierre Lafitte, were to be auctioned at this place. An inspector of customs and twelve men were stationed at the spot. John Lafitte attacked them, killed the inspector, wounded two men, and made the rest prisoners.

Still he was not arrested. His island was fortified, his schooners and feluccas were swift, his men were well organized and numbered four hundred, the Federal Government was getting the worst of it in war with Great Britain, and, above all, the prevalence of West Indian ideas in New Orleans was a secure shelter. He sent his spoils daily up La Fourche to Donaldsonville on the Mississippi, and to other points. Strong, well-armed escorts protected them. Claiborne asked the legislature to raise one hundred men for six months' service. The request was neglected. At the same time a filibustering expedition against Texas was only stopped by energetic measures. The Federal courts could effect nothing. An expedition captured both Lafittes, but they disappeared, and the writs were returned «not found.»

But now the tide turned. Society began to repudiate the outlaws. In July, 1814, a grand jury denounced them as pirates, and exhorted the people «to remove the stain that has fallen on all classes of society in the minds of the good people of the sister States.» Indictments were found against one Johnness and one Johannot for piracies in the Gulf, and against Pierre Lafitte as accessory. Lafitte was arrested, bail was refused, and he found himself at last shut up in the calaboza.

Weighing all the facts, it is small wonder that the Delta Creoles coquetted with the Baratarians. To say no more of Spanish American or French West Indian tincture, there was the embargo. There were the warships of Europe skimming ever to and fro in the entrances and exits of the Gulf. Rarely in days of French or Spanish rule had this purely agricultural country and non-manufacturing town been so removed to the world's end as just at this time. The Mississippi, northward, was free; but its perils had hardly lessened since the days of Spanish rule. Then it was said, in a curious old Western advertisement of 1797, whose English is worthy of notice:

> «No danger need be apprehended from the enemy, as every person whatever will be under cover, made proof against rifle or musket balls, and convenient port-holes for firing out of. Each of the boats are armed with six pieces, carry a pound ball, also a number of muskets, and amply supplied with plenty of ammunition, strongly manned with choice hands, and masters of approved knowledge.»

Scarcely any journey, now, outside of Asia and Africa, is more arduous than was then the trip from St. Louis to New Orleans. Vagabond Indians, white marauders, Spanish-armed extortion and arrest, and the natural perils of the stream, made the river little, if any, less dangerous than the Gulf. Culbert and Maglibray were the baser Lafittes of the Mississippi, and Cottonwood Creek their Barataria.

And the labors and privations were greater than the dangers. The conveyances were keel-boats, barges, and flat-boats. The flat-boats, at New Orleans, were broken up for their lumber, their slimy gunwales forming along the open gutter's edge in many of the streets a narrow and treacherous substitute for a pavement. The keel-boats and barges returned up-stream, propelled now by sweeps and now by warping or by *cordelle* (hand tow-ropes), consuming «three or four months of the most painful toil that can be imagined.» Exposure and bad diet «ordinarily destroyed one-third of the crew.»

But on the 10th of January, 1812, there had pushed in to the landing at New Orleans a sky-blue thing with a long bowsprit, «built after the fashion of a ship, with port-holes in the side,» and her cabin in the hold. She was the precursor of the city's future greatness, the *Orleans*, from Pittsburg, the first steam vessel on the Mississippi.

Here was a second freedom of the great river mightier than that wrested from Spain. Commercial grandeur seemed just at hand. All Spanish America was asserting its independence; Whitney's genius was making cotton the world's greatest staple; immigrants were swarming into the West; the Mississippi valley would be the provision-house of Europe, the importer of untold millions of manufactures; New Orleans would keep the only gate. Instead of this, in June, 1812, Congress declared war against Great Britain. Barataria seemed indispensable, and New Orleans was infested with dangers.

In 1813, Wilkinson, still commanding in the West, marched to the Mobile; in April he drove the Spaniards out of Fort Charlotte and raised a small fortification, Fort Bowyer, to command the entrance of Mobile Bay. Thus the Spanish, neighbors only less objectionable than the British, were crowded back to Pensacola. But, this done, Wilkinson was ordered to the Canadian frontier, and even took part of his few regulars with him.

The English were already in the Gulf; the Indians were growing offensive; in July seven hundred crossed the Perdido into Mississippi; in September massacred three hundred and fifty whites at Fort Mimms, and opened the Creek war. Within New Orleans bands of drunken Choctaws roamed the streets. The Baratarians were seen daily in the public resorts. Incendiary fires became alarmingly common, and the *batture* troubles again sprang up. Naturally, at such a junction, Lafitte and his men reached the summit of power.

In February, 1814, four hundred country militia reported at Magazine Barracks, opposite New Orleans. The Governor tried to force out the city militia. He got only clamorous denunciation and refusal to obey. The country muster offered their aid to enforce the order. The city companies heard of it, and only Claiborne's discreetness averted the mortifying disaster of a battle without an enemy. The country militia, already deserting, was disbanded. Even the legislature withheld its support, and Claiborne was everywhere denounced as a traitor. He had to report to the President his complete failure. Still, he insisted apologetically, the people were emphatically ready to «turn out in case of actual invasion.» Only so patient a man could understand that the Creoles were conscientious in their lethargy. Fortunately the invasion did not come until the Creek war had brought to view the genius of Andrew Jackson.

In April, Government raised the embargo. But the relief was tardy; the banks suspended. Word came that Paris had fallen. Napoleon had abdicated. England would throw new vigor into the war with America, and could spare troops for the conquest of Louisiana.

In August the Creeks made peace. Some British officers landed at Apalachicola, Florida, bringing artillery. Some disaffected Creeks joined them and were by them armed and drilled. But now, at length, the Government took steps to defend the South-West.

General Jackson was given the undertaking. He wrote to Claiborne to hold his militia ready to march – an order very easy to give. In September he repaired to Mobile, which was already threatened. The British Colonel Nicholls had landed at Pensacola with some companies of infantry, from two sloops-of-war. The officers from Apalachicola and a considerable body of Indians had joined him, without objection from the Spaniards.

Suddenly attention was drawn to the Baratarians. On the third of September an armed brig had appeared off Grande Terre. She fired on an inbound vessel, forcing her to run aground, tacked, and presently anchored some six miles from shore. Certain of the islanders went off in a boat, ventured too near, and, turning to retreat, were overhauled by the brig's pinnace, carrying British colors and a white flag. In the pinnace were two naval officers and a captain of infantry. They asked for Mr. Lafitte, one officer speaking in French for the other.

«He is ashore,» said the chief person in the island boat, and received a packet addressed «To Mr. Lafitte, Barataria.» The officers asked that it be carefully delivered to him in person. The receiver of it, however, induced them to continue on, and when they were plainly in his power revealed himself.

«I, myself, am Mr. Lafitte.» As they drew near the shore, he counseled them to conceal their business from his men. More than two hundred Baratarians lined the beach clamoring for the arrest of the «spies,» but Lafitte contrived to get them safely to his dwelling, quieted his men, and opened the packet.

There were four papers in it. First, Colonel Nicholls's appeal to the Creoles to help restore Louisiana to Spain; to Spaniards, French, Italians, and Britons, to aid in abolishing American usurpation; and to Kentuckians, to exchange supplies for money, and neutrality for an open Mississippi. Second, his letter to Lafitte offering a naval captain's commission to him, lands to all his followers, and protection in persons and property to all, if the pirates, with their fleet, would put themselves under the British naval commander, and announcing the early invasion of Louisiana with a powerful force. Third, an order from the naval commander in Pensacola Bay, to Captain Lockyer, the bearer of the packet, to procure restitution at Barataria for certain late piracies, or to «carry destruction over the whole place»; but also repeating Colonel Nicholls's overtures. And fourth, a copy of the orders under which Captain Lockyer had come. He was to secure the Baratarians' coöperation in an attack on Mobile, or, at all events, their neutrality. According to Lafitte, the captain added verbally the offer of $30,000 and many other showy inducements.

Lafitte asked time to consider. He withdrew; when in a moment the three officers and their crew were seized by the pirates and imprisoned. They were kept in confinement all night. In the morning Lafitte appeared, and, with many apologies for the rudeness of his men, conducted the officers to their pinnace, and they went off to the brig. The same day he addressed a letter to Captain Lockyer asking a fortnight to «put his affairs in order,» when he would be «entirely at his disposal.» It is noticeable for its polished dignity and the purity of its English.

Was this anything more than stratagem? The Spaniard and Englishman were his foe and his prey. The Creoles were his friends. His own large interests were scattered all over Lower Louisiana. His patriotism has been over-praised; and yet we may allow him patriotism. His whole war, on the main-land side, was only with a set of ideas not superficially fairer than his own. They seemed to him unsuited to the exigencies of the times and the country. Thousands of Louisianians thought as he did. They and he – to borrow from a distance the phrase of another – were «polished, agreeable, dignified, averse to baseness and vulgarity.» They accepted friendship, honor, and party faith as sufficient springs of action, and only dispensed with the sterner question of right and wrong. True, Pierre, his brother, and Dominique, his most intrepid captain, lay then in the calaboza. Yet should he, so able to take care of himself against all comers and all fates, so scornful of all subordination, for a paltry captain's commission and a doubtful thirty thousand, help his life-time enemies to invade the country and city of his commercial and social intimates?

He sat down and penned a letter to his friend Blanque, of the legislature, and sent the entire British packet, asking but one favor, the «amelioration of the situation of his unhappy brother»; and the next morning one of the New Orleans papers contained the following advertisement:

> $1000 REWARD
>
> Will be paid for the apprehending of PIERRE LAFITTE, who broke and escaped last night from the prison of the parish. Said Pierre Lafitte is about five feet ten inches height, stout made, light complexion, and somewhat cross-eyed, further description is considered unnecessary, as he is very well known in the city.
>
> Said Lafitte took with him three negroes, to wit: [giving their names and those of their owners]; the above reward will be paid to any person delivering the said Lafitte to the subscriber.
>
> J. H. Holland,
> *Keeper of the Prison.*

On the 7th, John Lafitte wrote again to Blanque, – the British brig and two sloops-of-war still hovered in the offing, – should he make overtures to the United States Government? Blanque's advice is not known; but on the 10th, Lafitte made such overtures by letter to Claiborne, inclosed in one from Pierre Lafitte – who had joined him – to M. Blanque.

The outlawed brothers offered themselves and their men to defend Barataria, asking only oblivion of the past. The high-spirited periods of John Lafitte challenge admiration, even while they betray tinges of sophistry that may or may not have been apparent to the writer. «All the offense I have committed,» wrote he, «I was forced to by certain vices in our laws.»

The heads of the small naval and military force then near New Orleans were Commodore Paterson and Colonel Ross. They had organized and were hurriedly preparing a descent upon the Baratarians. A general of the Creole militia was Villeré, son of the unhappy patriot of 1768. Claiborne, with these three officers, met in council, with the Lafittes' letters and the British overtures before them, and debated the question whether the pirates' service should be accepted. Villeré voted yea, but Ross and Paterson stoutly nay, and thus it was decided. Nor did the British send ashore for Lafitte's final answer; but lingered distantly for some days and then vanished.

Presently the expedition of Ross and Paterson was ready. Stealing down the Mississippi, it was joined at the mouth by some gun-vessels, sailed westward into the Gulf, and headed for Barataria. There was the schooner *Carolina*, six gun-vessels, a tender, and a launch. On the 16th of September they sighted Grande Terre, formed in line of battle, and stood for the entrance of the bay.

Within the harbor, behind the low island, the pirate fleet was soon descried forming in line. Counting all, schooners and feluccas, there were ten vessels. Two miles from shore the *Carolina* was stopped by shoal water, and the two heavier gun-vessels grounded. But armed boats were launched, and the attack entered the pass and moved on into the harbor.

Soon two of the Baratarians' vessels were seen to be on fire; another, attempting to escape, grounded, and the pirates, except a few brave leaders, were flying. One of the fired vessels burned, the other was boarded and saved, the one which grounded got off again and escaped. All the rest were presently captured. At this moment, a fine, fully-armed schooner appeared outside the island, was chased and taken. Scarcely was this done when another showed herself to eastward. The *Carolina* gave chase. The stranger stood for Grande Terre, and ran into water where the *Carolina* could not follow. Four boats were launched; whereupon the chase opened fire on the *Carolina*, and the gun-vessels in turn upon the chase, firing across the island from inside, and in half an hour she surrendered. She proved to be the *General Bolivar*, armed with one eighteen, two twelve, and one six-pounder.

The nest was broken up. «All their buildings and establishments at Grande Terre and Grande Isle, with their telegraph and stores at Chenière Caminada, were destroyed. On the last day of September, the elated squadron, with their prizes, – seven cruisers of Lafitte, and three armed schooners under Carthagenian colors, – arrived in New Orleans harbor amid the peal of guns from the old barracks and Fort St. Charles.

But among the prisoners the commanding countenance of John Lafitte and the cross-eyed visage of his brother Pierre were not to be seen. Both men had escaped up Bayou La Fourche to the «German Coast.» Others who had had like fortune by and by gathered on Last Island, some sixty miles west of Grande Terre, and others found asylum in New Orleans, where they increased the fear of internal disorder.

Paterson and Ross struck the Baratarians just in time. The fortnight asked of the British by Lafitte expired the next day. The British themselves were far away eastward, drawing off from an engagement of the day before, badly worsted. A force of seven hundred British troops, six hundred Indians, and four vessels of war had attacked Fort Bowyer, commanding the entrances of Mobile Bay and Mississippi Sound. Its small garrison had repulsed them and they retired again to Pensacola with serious loss, including a sloop-of-war grounded and burned.

Now General Jackson gathered four thousand men on the Alabama River, regulars, Tennesseeans, and Mississippi dragoons, and early in November attacked Pensacola with great spirit, took the two forts, – which the Spaniards had allowed the English to garrison, – drove the English to their shipping and the Indians into the interior, and returned to Mobile. Here he again called on Claiborne to muster his militia. Claiborne convened the legislature and laid the call before it.

It was easy to count up the resources of defense: Paterson's feeble navy, the weak Fort St. Philip on the river, the unfinished Fort

Petites Coquilles on the Rigolets, Ross's seven hundred regulars, a thousand militia, mustered at last after three imperative calls, a wretchedly short supply of ammunition – nothing more. «Our situation,» says La Carrière Latour, «seemed desperate.» Twelve thousand chosen British troops were known to have sailed for Louisiana.

Measures of defense were pushed on. Forts and stockades were manned, new companies and battalions were mustered, among them one of Choctaw Indians and two of free men of color. Jails were emptied to swell the ranks.

And now John Lafitte, encouraged by Claiborne and the legislature, came forward again. Jackson, in one of his proclamations, had called the Baratarians «hellish banditti,» whose aid he spurned. But now these two intrepid leaders met face to face in a room that may still be pointed out in the old cabildo, and the services of Lafitte and his skilled artillerists were offered and accepted for the defense of the city. All proceedings against them were suspended; some were sent to man the siege-guns of Forts Petites Coquilles, St. John, and St. Philip, and others were enrolled in a body of artillery under «Captains» Beluche and Dominique. One of the general's later reports alludes to the Baratarians as «these gentlemen.» The battle was fought on the 8th of January.

New Orleans emerged from the smoke of General Jackson's great victory comparatively Americanized. Peace followed, or rather the tardy news of peace, which had been sealed at Ghent more than a fortnight before the battle. With peace came open ports. The highways of commercial greatness crossed each other in the custom-house, not behind it, as in Spanish or embargo days, and the Baratarians were no longer esteemed a public necessity. Scattered, used, and pardoned, they passed into eclipse – not total, but fatally visible where they most desired to shine. The ill-founded tradition that the Lafittes were never seen after the battle of New Orleans had thus a figurative reality.

In Jackson's general order of January 21st, Captains Dominique and Beluche, «with part of their former crew,» were gratefully mentioned for their gallantry in the field, and the brothers Lafitte for «the same courage and fidelity.» On these laurels Dominique You rested and settled down to quiet life in New Orleans, enjoying the vulgar admiration which is given to the survivor of lawless adventures. It may seem superfluous to add that he became a leader in ward politics.

In the spring of 1815, Jackson, for certain imprisonments of men who boldly opposed the severity of his prolonged dictatorship in New Orleans, was forced at length to regard the decrees of court. It was then that his «hellish banditti,» turned «Jacksonites,» did their last swaggering in the famous Exchange Coffee-house, at the corner of St. Louis and Chartres streets, and when he was fined $1000 for contempt of court, aided in drawing his carriage by hand through the streets.

Of Beluche or of Pierre Lafitte little or nothing more is known. But John Lafitte continued to have a record. After the city's deliverance a ball was given to officers of the army. General Coffee was present. So, too, was Lafitte. On their being brought together and introduced, the General showed some hesitation of manner, whereupon the touchy Baratarian advanced haughtily and said, with emphasis, «Lafitte, the pirate.» Thus, unconsciously, it may be, he foretold that part of his life which still lay in the future.

That future belongs properly to the history of Texas. Galveston Island had early been one of Lafitte's stations, and now became his permanent depot, whence he carried on extensive operations, contraband and piratical. His principal cruiser was the *Jupiter*. She sailed under a Texas commission. Under the filibuster Long, who ruled at Nacogdoches, Lafitte became governor of Galveston.

An American ship was robbed of a quantity of specie on the high seas. Shortly afterward the *Jupiter* came into Galveston with a similar quantity on board. A United States cruiser accordingly was sent to lay off the coast, and watch her maneuvers. Lafitte took offense at this, and sent to the American commander to demand explanation. His letter, marked with more haughtiness, as well as with more ill-concealed cunning than his earlier correspondence with the British and Americans, was not answered.

In 1818 a storm destroyed four of his fleet. He sent one Lafage to New Orleans, who brought out thence a new schooner of two guns, manned by fifty men. He presently took a prize; but had hardly done so, when he was met by the revenue cutter *Alabama*, answered her challenge with a broadside, engaged her in a hard battle, and only surrendered after heavy loss. The schooner and prize were carried into Bayou St. John, the crew taken to New Orleans, tried in the United States Court, condemned and executed.

Once more Lafitte took the disguise of a Colombian commission and fitted out three vessels. The name of one is not known. Another was the *General Victoria*, and a third the schooner *Blank* – or, we may venture to spell it *Blanque*. He coasted westward and southward as far as Sisal, Yucatan, taking several small prizes, and one that was very valuable, a schooner that had been a slaver. Thence he turned toward Cape Antonio, Cuba, and in the open gulf disclosed to his followers that his Colombian commission had expired.

Forty-one men insisted on leaving him. He removed the guns of the *General Victoria*, crippled her rigging, and gave her into their hands. They sailed for the Mississippi, and after three weeks arrived there and surrendered to the officers of the customs. The Spanish Consul claimed the vessel, but she was decided to belong to the men who had fitted her out.

Lafitte seems now to have become an open pirate. Villeré, Governor of Louisiana after Claiborne, and the same who had counseled the acceptance of Lafitte's first overtures in 1819, spoke in no measured terms of «those men who lately, under the false pretext of serving the cause of the Spanish patriots, scoured the Gulf of Mexico, making its waves groan,» etc. It seems many of them had found homes in New Orleans, making it the seat of disorders and crimes which he would not attempt to describe.»

The end of this uncommon man is lost in a confusion of improbable traditions. As late as 1822 his name, if not his person, was the terror of the Gulf and the Straits of Florida. But in that year the United States navy swept those waters with vigor, and presently reduced the perils of the Gulf – for the first time in its history – to the hazard of wind and wave.

A few steps down the central walk of the middle cemetery of those that lie along Claiborne street, from Custom-house down to Conti, on the right-hand side, stands the low, stuccoed tomb of Dominique You. The tablet bears his name surmounted by the emblem of Free Masonry. Some one takes good care of it. An epitaph below proclaims him, in French verse, the intrepid hero of a hundred battles on land and sea; who, without fear and without reproach, will on day view, unmoved, the destruction of the world. To this spot, in 1830, he was followed on his way by the Louisiana Legion (city militia), and laid to rest with military honors, at the expense of the town council.

POLITICAL REINFORCEMENT OF ETHNIC DOMINANCE IN LOUISIANA, 1812-1845

By Joseph G. Tregle, Jr.

Mathematicians, we are told, look on beauty bare, but it is not given to historians to enjoy any comparable immediacy in the perception of truth. Time itself infuses shifting meaning into the very words which are our links with the past. Today's symbols of the attractive and desirable may well have been freighted with other significance for generations gone by.

This Conference properly celebrates the Americanization of the Gulf region, with at least implicit acceptance that the process was the natural fulfillment of a better destiny, the realization of a welcome «now» to which all else was but prelude. Yet to many of those who lived in early nineteenth century Louisiana, that same process was feared, condemned, and resisted as death itself. Recognition of its force and appreciation of its potential insatiability were in truth the mainsprings of the state's early political history, as they are indeed the basic components of this paper.

Two major segments of Louisiana's population in the beginning years of the 1800's aligned themselves desperately against the Americanization of their society. Both were Gallic in language and culture, Roman Catholic by at least tradition, and relatively innocent of any experience in those techniques and adjustments known as the republican or democratic political way of life. The more numerous of these two Gallic groups was the *ancienne population*, comprised of those members of the free white community who traced their lineage back to colonial Louisiana.[1] Their allies were the so-called «Foreign French,» some of whom were refugees from a continental homeland wracked by revolution, the crushing demands of Napoleonic ambition, and the restoration of vengeful Bourbons, while others were exiles from West Indian islands bloodied, like Santo Domingo, in slave insurrection.

Of none of them had the United States asked consent when Louisiana passed to American dominion in 1803. The union was not, however, unattractive in their eyes, for even then the clear advantages of fellowship in the dynamic young republic were manifest to all but the most dense.[2] But to welcome acceptance into the American nation was not to acquiesce in the surrender of their personality or the annihilation of their whole sense of identity. Who of the *ancienne population* could be insensitive to the reality that Louisiana was *his* native land, where French customs and language had prevailed as long as the community itself? And who among the «Foreign French» did not conceive of the Gallic character of his new home as a precious inheritance not to be twice lost?

The fears of these two French groups for their future had been born with the very arrival of the Americans in their midst. The governor placed over them spoke no French; worse, he was to rule as arbitrarily as any colonial officer before him, in that Territory of Orleans to which they were now to be confined, cut away from the vast remainder of what had been French and Spanish Louisiana. Solemn pledges of the Purchase Treaty were broken by United States fiat, threats were heard to make English the legal language, and suddenly there was the danger that cherished property rights might be lost in the baffling insubstantialities of something called the common law. Their faith was adjudged superstition and their innocent enjoyments of the Sabbath labeled sinful. In their own Louisiana these French residents were displaced by newcomers who looked upon all political appointments and positions of authority as perquisites of their status as purchasers of the territory and who may or may not have jested in their claim to have paid fifty cents a head for the original inhabitants.[3]

Against these dangers the French community could pit only limited resources. The *ancienne population*, despite their many winning and appealing qualities, were inescapably the victims of generations of French and Spanish colonialism: most of them were illiterate; they counted in their ranks no doctors, no editors, no bankers or commercial princes, and but few lawyers of any note; and none of them had the slightest experience in political combat. Their one safeguard was in numbers, for, at least in the beginning, they were the clear majority in the community. Recognizing their cultural affinity to the «Foreign French,» they thus reluctantly turned to that group for political tutelage and leadership, aware that in such collaboration was the only hope for survival of Gallic supremacy. It was for them a bitter choice as the «Foreign French» had long antagonized native Louisianians by their air of sophisticated superiority and amused disdain of local crudities. But, it was this or inevitable submission to the even more hateful Anglo-Saxon ways.[4] Some additional support was found, strangely enough, from such Americans as Edward Livingston, whose own peculiar alienation from the older section of the nation turned him naturally toward the French element in his new home. Marriage to a Santo Domingan widow and a typically self-centered appreciation of the power to be won by filling at least part of the French leadership vacuum led him firmly into the Gallic camp.[5]

The years of territorial existence from 1803 to 1812 did nothing to minimize the sharpness of ethnic rivalry. If anything, old hostilities deepened, when each day brought increasing evidence of the slow erosion of Gallic numerical superiority. No reversal of this tendency could be reasonably expected. French Louisianians readily understood that if they were to preserve the Gallic nature of their society they had to fix the political power which protected their way of life in such rigid and unchangeable form as to withstand whatever buffeting the years ahead might bring. The vehicle chosen for this purpose was the Constitution of 1812.

This first organic law was drafted for a Louisiana clearly divided into three distinct geographic areas reflecting the ethnographic diversity of the community. French power centered in the southwest, along the rich Mississippi River coast, Bayou Lafourche, and in the prairie lands of Attakapas and Opelousas. The heart of the Anglo-Saxon, Protestant population was the piney woods uplands region beyond Red River, together with the lush Ouachita-Concordia cotton lands of north Louisiana and the Florida parishes' mixture of fertile alluvial bluffs and interior timberland. Finally there was the metropolitan commercial center of New Orleans, a jumble of French and Anglo-Saxon, Irish and German, Indian and free men of color. In 1812 the free white Gallic population of the southwest exceeded that of non-Gallic north Louisiana and Florida, but did not constitute a majority of the potential voter strength of the state. Additional support sufficient to assure Gallic political dominance was readily available at that time from the ponderable French segment of New Orleans. But was this combination of Latin interests from the rural southwest and the city likely to prevail for long over the steadily rising numbers of non-French migrants flooding into the metropolis and the American north? The answer was a convincing if painful «no.» The need existed to freeze the distribution of political power according to its 1812 pattern; hence the explanation emerges for those arrangements of the first Louisiana constitution which were to shape the state's political life until 1845.

Gallic leadership, brilliantly marshalled by such «Foreign French» as Etienne Mazureau and Louis Moreau Lislet, concentrated on five principal areas of constitutional craftsmanship to assure their purpose: representation in the legislature; suffrage and office holding requirements; mechanics of choosing a governor; definition of the governor's prerogative; and procedures by which the constitution might be amended. The state was divided into seventeen senatorial districts, to be forever indivisible. These districts were structured in such a way that New Orleans and the sections above the Red River where American strength might grow were certain always to be outweighed in the upper chamber by those districts along the Mississippi River coast and the southern interior where Gallic influence was clearly destined to remain paramount. With their great superiority of population and voters, Florida and New Orleans had to be content with no greater senatorial voice than that accorded the combined forces of the four least developed districts of the state. The single vote of the great metropolis was balanced by that of Pointe Coupee, with only a fraction of the capital's population and voting strength.[6]

The lower chamber, too, though to a lesser degree, was designed for the preservation of the status quo. Representation was apportioned among thirteen counties, subdivided into the unique parish units peculiar to Louisiana, «to be forever regulated and ascertained by the number of qualified electors therein,» as determined by regular four-year census counts. Total membership of the House could never exceed fifty, thus placing a limit on the possibility of any significant shift of power through rapid growth of any one area.[7]

Buttressing this already sturdy design were qualifications for suffrage and office-holding clearly formulated to favor the original inhabitants and exclude the newcomers. These recent arrivals, aside from being non-Gallic, were not likely to possess real property, slaves, cattle, horses, corporation stock, mercantile emporiums, taverns, or billiard tables, which almost alone in that splendid age were subject to taxation. Senators were required to be twenty-seven years of age, resident four years in the state and one year in their district, and possessed of landed property in that area to the sum of one thousand dollars. Representatives were to be at least twenty-one, with residence of two years in the state and one in their county, and with a landed property holding of at least four hundred dollars. Suffrage was limited to adult American citizens who had resided at least one year in their county and whose names had been enrolled on the state tax list during the six-month period immediately preceding an election.[8] Little room existed in such a system for young Yankee stockboys and clerks newly come to New Orleans, for Irish draymen or German butchers, or yeoman squatters in the northern hills.

The governor was to be elected by joint ballot of the two houses of the legislature with the choice being limited to one of the two candidates who had received the highest popular vote in a general state election. This provision was in the nature of a general backstop should the carefully drafted suffrage requirements fail in some way to produce the expected Gallic electoral majority. In such an untoward circumstance the hapless French candidate for governor, surely at least in second place on the popular poll, might be snatched to office by a legislature almost certain to be controlled by the Gallic interest because of its constitutionally ordained structure. Further security was found in the qualifications required for the governorship: no one was eligible except free white citizens above the age of thirty-five, who had been resident six years in the state, and who were holders of landed property valued at five thousand dollars or more.[9]

With such good prospects for monopoly of the governorship, the French forces were determined to push its powers to the fullest. Aside from the usual executive prerogatives, Louisiana governors were granted wide appointive rights, with power to name the secretary of state, all judges, the attorney-general, all sheriffs, all justices of the peace, and all other officers whose places were established by the constitution without specific selection being otherwise provided.[10] State legislation eventually gave the executives additional right to name district attorneys for the state's judicial districts, surveyors, notaries, auctioneers, various state bank directors, coroners, regents for the central and primary schools of New Orleans, port wardens, and harbor-masters.[11] For those exhausting labors, Louisiana governors were rewarded with a salary of $7500 a year, higher by $2500 than the closest similar stipend paid in 1821 by a sister state.[12]

Having thus built to their pleasure, the Gallic architects of this awesome governmental structure proceeded to make it almost impervious to change. Amendment required a process so awkward and baffling as to frustrate any attempt at reform. If the legislature during the first twenty days of a regular session passed a measure listing specific changes to be made in the constitution, the proposal was referred to popular vote at the next election of representatives. Popular rejection killed the proposal, but a favorable expression required the next legislature to consider the proposition for a second time. Renewed passage by the legislature sent the measure back for yet another popular vote the following year. Successful passage through both plebiscites bound the legislature at its next meeting to call for a constitutional convention to readopt, amend, or recast the fundamental law. Not surpisingly, the constitution remained completely unaltered from 1812 to 1845.[13]

How well this Constitution of 1812 fulfilled its objectives of continued Gallic dominance in the state is a question which has received little attention from historians for the simple reason that few of them have understood that such was indeed its purpose. This lack of knowledge is largely attributable to the frequent but regrettable assumption that past societies must have been concerned about issues that we today feel they *should* have been concerned about. And our own recent generations have been thus misled into viewing everything in the antebellum South in terms of economic class struggle or the slavery issue.

The most familiar of the interpretations of the Constitution of 1812 maintains that the authors of the constitution aimed primarily at fixing power in the hands of the southern slave-holding parishes, with attendant exclusion of a major part of the white male population from the rights of suffrage. Roger Shugg, for example, states flatly that the constitution «never admitted to the polls more than a third of the adult freemen,» and «favored planters in the black belt at the expense of white people in New Orleans and on the frontier.»[14]

Much of this claim is true, but to stress this condition as pivotal to the contemporary purposes of the society is seriously to distort the reality of early Louisiana history. Shugg's figures, aside from being incorrect, fail to give a focused picture of the state. Despite their low incidence of slaveholding, for example, the Florida parishes and those north of Red River in 1820 possessed 38.5 percent of the qualified voters of the state, a considerable margin over their 30.5 percent share of the white male Louisianians over twenty in that same year. Property qualifications and all other difficulties encountered under the 1812 organic law did not keep the voting eligibility of this area below 58 percent of the adult male group. In the French, black belt region south of Red River and excluding Orleans and Jefferson parishes, 34.9 percent of the state's white adult population in 1820 controlled 44.4 percent of the electorate, with 59 percent of the white adult males of the section possessing the ballot. Surely a one percent difference in voter eligibility between the so-called black belt and the yeoman farmer area is not the disparity implicit in the Shugg statistic. But much falls into place when we turn to the figures for the metropolitan area. With 34.5 percent of the adult white male population, Orleans and Jefferson parishes possessed but 17 percent of the electorate, with only 23 percent of adult white males holding the ballot. In the urban community the strictures of the constitution bound most tightly, because here the American menace was strongest, not that of antislavery.

There can be no question that tax requirements affected Louisiana suffrage to a considerable degree in the early nineteenth century. Equally clear, the dominantly French «blackbelt» was by no means able to keep American strength in Florida and Red River parishes suppressed even by this clever device, for the latter section offset much of the advantage of the Gallic rural area by greater exploitation of its own numbers. In New Orleans and Jefferson, however, the odds mounted against the Anglo-Saxon influence as the French here could more effectively keep the suffrage severely limited by property qualifications which worked to the advantage of the older population with its long established realty holdings. All was safe so long as the country parishes balanced with that slight but precious advantage in the Latin areas. Despite the gross inequity inflicted on the metropolis, Louisiana offered the ballot to 45+ percent of all white adult males in 1821, and as many as 34 percent of the state's white males over twenty actually voted in the gubernatorial campaign of 1830.[15]

As noted earlier, however, suffrage requirements were not the whole story. Gallic strength also rested upon the almost impregnable position enjoyed by the French section in the legislature. The permanent division of the state into unchangeable senatorial districts, for example, gave to the Latin country parishes 47 percent of the membership of the Louisiana Senate. Against the 41 percent strength of the Florida and northern parishes, the French element could also count upon sufficient support within the 11.7 percent controlled by Orleans and Jefferson parishes to secure an almost constant majority in the upper chamber. Much the same pattern prevailed in the lower house, where from 1820 to 1841 the relative strength remained fixed at 46 percent for the parishes south of Red River, 38 percent for Florida and the northern parishes, and 16 percent for Orleans and Jefferson.[16]

The Anglo-Americans repeatedly tried to breach this wall by proposals to amend the constitution or at least to adopt more equitable apportionment but, just as regularly the forces of French influence in the south and New Orleans combined to beat back the attack. Despite direct constitutional mandate directing reapportionment every four years on the basis of qualified electors, supporters of the status quo managed to thwart any new apportionment act of whatever sort from 1826 to 1841.[17] Many of the Orleans delegates obviously preferred maintenance of French strength in Louisiana to any change which, even though offering greater voice to the city, might work primarily to the advantage of the Anglo-American forces as a whole. Low in delegate strength, the metropolis nonetheless was the critical weight which could throw the majority to one side or the other. New Orleans, said the sharp-eyed Henry Clay in his 1830 visit there, «is the pivot» around which Louisiana legislative control revolved.[18]

This situation made for constant political unrest and underlay all state politics, even through the broader-based disputes of the Jacksonian era. Despite an overt advantage in the constitutional structure of the state, the French could never relax, for the Americans were conscious not only of their handicaps but also of their ever increasing numbers. Growing migration into the northern parishes and the constant flood of Americans, Irish, and Germans into New Orleans gave vigor to their determination to topple the Constitution of 1812.

In a sense it was a battle for the soul of Louisiana. Americanization, we know, would eventually win – but that is another story.

Notes

1. The ethnic terminologies of early Louisiana are confusing and have been accordingly widely misunderstood. "Creole" had but one meaning in the early 1800's: native born. The term was applied to anyone native to the state or the earlier colony, be he free or slave; white, black, or colored; Gallic, Anglo-Saxon, Irish, or Germanic by cultural identity. The *ancienne population* were those free white creoles whose ancestry extended into colonial Louisiana, and who were almost all Gallic in speech and culture, though some few among them had descended from those small numbers of Spanish settlers introduced into the colony prior to 1803. These last residents were essentially submerged in the vastly superior ranks of their French-speaking compatriots. For an extended treatment of this topic, see Joseph G. Tregle, Jr., "Early New Orleans Society: A Reappraisal," *Journal of Southern History* 18 (1952), 20-36 (hereinafter cited as Tregle, "Early New Orleans Society").

2. Despite George Washington Cable's familiar story of creoles weeping as the tricolor was lowered in the Place d'Armes in New Orleans in 1803, there is no evidence that their tears bespoke more than a sentimental farewell to a no longer profitable relationship. Cable's observations are in George E. Waring and George W. Cable, *The History and Present Conditions of New Orleans* (Washington, 1881), 32.

3. For some insight into these tensions, which continued well into the period of statehood, see J. Rodriguez, *Défense Fulminante Contre la Violation des Droits du Peuple* (New Orleans, 1827), 35ff.; Bernard Marigny, "Reflections on the Campaign of General Andrew Jackson in Louisiana in 1814 and '15," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 6 (1923), 61-85; Bernard Marigny, *Memoir . . . Addressed to His Fellow Citizens of New Orleans* (New Orleans, 1853), 36 ff.; Isaac L. Baker to Josiah Stoddard Johnston, October 5, 1826, in Josiah Stoddard Johnston Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (hereinafter cited as Johnston Papers); Everett S. Brown, ed., "Letters from Louisiana, 1813-1814," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 11 (1924), 570-579; New Orleans *L'Ami des Lois* January 10, June 18, October 10, 1822; New Orleans *Louisiana Gazette*, August 24, 1822; August 1, October 1, 2, 1823; April 5, 1825; New Orleans *Louisiana Advertiser*, November 27, 28, December 1, 2, 1823; New Orleans *Argus*, July 7, 1828.

4. Tregle, "Early New Orleans Society," 31; G.W. Pierson, "Alexis de Tocqueville in New Orleans," *Franco-American Review* 1 (1936), 34; New Orleans *Louisiana Gazette*, April 14, 1824; October 3, 1825.

5. New Orleans *L'Ami des Lois*, October 12, 1822; New Orleans *Argus*, June 21, 1826; New Orleans *Louisiana Advertiser*, November 17, 1823.

6. Benjamin W. Dart, ed., *Constitutions of the State of Louisiana and Selected Federal Laws* (Indianapolis, 1932), 500 (hereinafter cited as Dart, ed., *Constitutions*); Henry A. Bullard and Thomas Curry, eds., *A New Digest of the State Laws of the State of Louisiana* (New Orleans, 1842), 544 (hereinafter cited as Bullard and Curry, eds., *Digest*); Louisiana *House Journal*, 5 Leg. 2 Sess., 26.

7. Dart, ed., *Constitutions*, 500.

8. *Ibid*., 501.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*, 502.

11. Bullard and Curry, eds., *Digest*, 26, 30, 36, 37, 374, 464, 537, 796.

12. New Orleans *Louisiana Gazette*, June 14, 1821.

13. Dart, ed., *Constitutions*, 506-507.

14. Roger W. Shugg, "Suffrage and Representation in Ante-bellum Louisiana," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 19 (1936), 390-1.

15. These computations are based on the unpublished federal census returns for Louisiana in 1820 and 1830 (microfilm copies of originals in National Archives, Louisiana State University in New Orleans Library, New Orleans, Louisiana); the census of eligible electors in the state taken in 1821 (Louisiana *House Journal*, 5 Leg. 2 Sess., 26); and state elections returns for 1830 (Louisiana *House Journal*, 10 Leg. 1 Sess., 7).

16. For the pertinent apportionment laws, see Louisiana *Acts*, 5 Leg. 2 Sess., March 22, 1822; 7 Leg. 2 Sess., April 7, 1826.

17. Louisiana *House Journal*, 9 Leg. 2 Sess., 22; 11 Leg. 2 Sess., 69; 12 Leg. 1 Sess., 34; Louisiana *Senate Journal*, 9 Leg. 2 Sess., 62; 11 Leg. 1 Sess., 11; Baton Rouge *Gazette*, August 11, 1827; June 16, 1832; New Orleans *Louisiana Advertiser*, January 11, 1832; New Orleans *Bee*, March 10, 1834.

18. Henry Clay to Josiah Stoddard Johnston, March 11, 1830, in Johnston Papers.

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THE RURAL FRENCH: ACADIANS, CREOLES, AND BLACKS

By W. H. Sparks

Forty years ago, there was quite an excitement among the cotton-planters, in the neighborhood of Natchez, upon the subject of sugar-planting in the southern portion of Louisiana. At that time it was thought the duty (two and a half cents per pound) on imported sugars would be continued as a revenue tax, and that it would afford sufficient protection to make the business of sugar-planting much more profitable than that of cotton. The section of country attracting the largest share of attention for this purpose was the Teche, or Attakapas country, the Bayous La Fourche, Terre Bonne, and Black. The Teche and La Fourche had long been settled by a population, known in Louisiana as the Acadian French. These people, thus named, had once resided in Nova Scotia and Lower Canada, or Canada East as now known. When peopled by the French, Nova Scotia was called Acadia. Upon the conquest by the English, these people were expelled from the country, and in a most inhuman and unchristian manner. They were permitted to choose the countries to which they would go, and were there sent by the British Government. Many went to Canada, some to Vincennes in Indiana, some to St. Louis, Cape Girardeau, Viedepouche, and Kaskaskia in Mississippi, and many returned to France.

Upon the cession, or rather donation to Spain of Louisiana by France, these, with many others of a population similar to these, from the different arrondissements of France, were sent to Louisiana, and were located in Opelousas, Attakapas, La Fourche, and in the parishes of St. John the Baptist, St. Charles, and St. James (parishes constituting the Acadian coast on the Mississippi). On the La Fourche they constituted, forty years ago, almost the entire population. They were illiterate and poor. Possessing the richest lands on earth, which they had reclaimed from the annual inundations of the Mississippi River by levees constructed along the margins of the stream—with a climate congenial and healthful, and with every facility afforded by the navigation of the bayou and the Mississippi for reaching the best market for all they could produce—yet, with all these natural advantages, promising to labor and enterprise the most ample rewards, they could not be stimulated to industry or made to understand them.

They had established their homes on the margin of the stream, and cleared a few acres of land donated by the Government, upon which to grow a little corn and a few vegetables. With a limited amount of stock, which found subsistence upon the cane and grass of the woods, and with the assistance of a shotgun, they managed to subsist—as Peake's mother served the Lord – after a fashion.

Their houses were unique: a slender frame, often of poles cut from the forest, and rudely squared, served the purpose. Into the studding were placed pins, extending from one to the other, horizontally, and about ten inches apart. The long gray moss of the country was then gathered and thrown by layers into a pit dug for the purpose, with the soil, until the pit was full, when water was added in sufficient quantities to wet the mass through; this done, all who are assisting in the construction of the house – men, women, boys, and girls – jump in upon it, and continue to tramp until mud and moss are completely intermingled and made of proper consistence, when it is gathered up and made into rolls about two feet long. These rolls are laid over the pins, commencing at the bottom or sill of the building, when each roll is bent down at the ends, covering the intervals between the pins, pressed hardly together, and smoothed with the hands, inside and out, forming a wall some five inches in thickness, with a perfectly smooth surface. The roof is first put on, and the floors laid. When this mud dries thoroughly it is white-washed; the house is then complete, and presents quite a neat appearance. It will continue to do so if the white-washing is annually continued. If, however, this is neglected, the lime falls off in spots, and the primitive mud comes out to view: then the appearance is anything but pleasant. No pains are taken to ornament their yards, or gather about them comforts. There is a pig or two in a pen in the corner of the yard, a hen-roost immediately at the house, a calf or two at large, and numerous half-starved, mangy dogs – and innumerable ragged, half-naked children, with little, black, piercing eyes, and dishevelled, uncombed hair falling about sallow, gaunt faces, are commingling in the yard with chickens, dogs, and calves. A sallow-faced, slatternly woman, bareheaded, with uncared-for hair, long, tangled, and black, with her dress tucked up to her knees, bare-footed and bare-legged, is wading through the mud from the bayou, with a dirty pail full of muddy Mississippi water.

A diminutive specimen of a man, clad in blue cottonade pants and hickory shirt, barefooted, with a palm-leaf hat upon his head, and an old rusty shot-gun in his hands, stands upon the levee, casting an inquiring look, first up and then down the bayou, deeply desiring and most ardently expecting a wandering duck or crane, as they fly along the course of the bayou. If unfortunately they come within reach of his fusee, he almost invariably brings them down. Then there is a shout from the children, a yelp from the dogs, and all run to secure the game; for too often, «No duck, no dinner.» Such a home and such inhabitants were to be seen on Bayou La Fourche forty years ago, and even now specimens of the genuine breed may there be found, as primitive as were their ancestors who first ventured a home in the Mississippi swamps.

The stream known as Bayou La Fourche, or The Fork, is a large stream, some one hundred yards wide, leaving the Mississippi at the town of Donaldsonville, eighty miles above the city of New Orleans, running south-southeast, emptying into the Gulf, through Timbalier Bay, and may properly be termed one of the mouths of the Mississippi. Its current movement does not in high water exceed three miles an hour, and when the Mississippi is at low water, it is almost imperceptible. Large steamers, brigs, and schooners come into it when the river is at flood, and carry out three or four hundred tons of freight each at a time.

The lands upon the banks of this stream

are remarkably fertile, entirely alluvial, and decline from the bank to the swamp, generally some one or two miles distant. This Acadian population was sent here during the Spanish domination, and with a view to opening up to cultivation this important tract of country. It was supposed they would become – under the favorable auspices of their emigration to the country, and with such facilities for accumulating money – a wealthy and intelligent population. This calculation was sadly disappointed. The mildness of the climate and the fruitfulness of the soil combined to enervate, instead of stimulating them to active industry, without which there can be no prosperity for any country. A few acres, though half cultivated, were found sufficient to yield an ample support, and the mildness of the climate required but little provision for clothing. Here, in this Eden upon earth, these people continued to live in a simplicity of primitive ignorance and indolence scarcely to be believed by any but an actual observer. Their implements of agriculture were those of two centuries before. More than half the population wore wooden shoes, when they wore any at all. Their wants were few, and were all supplied at home. Save a little flour, powder, and shot, they purchased nothing. These were paid for by the sale of the produce of the poultry-yard – the prudent savings from the labor of the women – to the market-boats from the city.

There were, at the period of which I write, but half a dozen Americans upon the bayou. These had found the country illy adapted to the growth of cotton, and some of them had commenced the planting of sugarcane. The results from this were very satisfactory, and consequently stimulating to the enterprise of men of means, who felt they could be more profitably employed in this new culture than in cotton, even in the very best cotton regions.

There was one man of high intelligence and long experience who denied this – Stephen Duncan, of Natchez – and the subsequent experience of many brought bitter regret that they had not yielded to the counsels of Dr. Duncan.

The great flood of 1828 had not touched the La Fourche or Teche, while the entire alluvial plain above had been covered many feet, and for many months. This was the most terrible inundation, perhaps, ever experienced in that region; and every one appeared to be now satisfied that to continue to cultivate lands already reduced to man's dominion, or to open and prepare any more, subject to this scourge, was madness. Hence the emigration from this chosen section to the new El Dorado. Lands rose rapidly in South Louisiana as an effect of this, while above, in the flooded district, they were to be bought for almost a nominal price. Those who ventured to purchase these and reduce them to cultivation realized fortunes rapidly; for there was not a sufficient flood to reach them again for ten years. The levees by this time had become so extended as to afford almost entire immunity against the floods of annual occurrence. The culture of sugar received a new impetus and began rapidly to increase, and capital came flowing in. Population of an industrious and hardy character was filling up the West, and the demand from that quarter alone was equal to the production, and both were increasing so rapidly as to induce the belief that it would be as much as all the sugar lands in the State could accomplish to supply this demand. Steam power for crushing the cane was introduced – an economy of labor which enhanced the profits of the production – and a new and national interest was developed, rendering more and more independent of foreign supply, at least that portion of the Union most difficult of access to foreign commerce – the great and growing West.

The Americans, or those Americans speaking English alone, immigrating into these sections of Louisiana, so far as the language, manners, and customs of the people were concerned, were going into a foreign land. The language of the entire population was French, or a patois, as the European French term it – a provincialism which a Parisian finds it difficult to understand. The ignorance and squalid poverty of these people put their society entirely out of the question, even if their language had been comprehensible. They were amiable, kind, law-abiding, virtuous, and honest, beyond any population of similar character to be found in any country. Out of some fifty thousand people, extending over five or six parishes, such a thing as a suit for slander, or an indictment for malicious mischief, or a case of bastardy was not known or heard of once in ten years. This will seem strange when we reflect that at this time schools were unknown, and not one out of fifty of the people could read or write, and when it was common for the judge of the District Court to ask, when a grand jury was impanelled, if there was a man upon it who could write, that he might make him foreman. And not unfrequently was he compelled to call from the court-room one who could, and trump him on the jury for a foreman, as the action was termed. There was not upon the La Fourche, which comprised three large parishes, but one pleasure carriage, and not half a dozen ladies' bonnets. The females wore a colored handkerchief tastily tied about their heads, when visiting or at church; and when not, not anything but blown, uncombed hair.

The enterprise of the new-comers did not stimulate to emulation the action of these people. They were content and unenvious, and when kindly received and respectfully treated, were social and generous in their intercourse with their American neighbors. They were confiding and trustful; but once deceived, they were not to be won back, but only manifested their resentment by withdrawing from communicating with the deceiver, and ever after distrusting, and refusing him their confidence. They were universally Catholic; consequently, sectarian disputes were unknown. They practised eminently the Christian virtues, and were constant in their attendance at mass. The priest was the universal arbiter in all disputes, and his decision most implicitly acquiesced in. They had a horror of debt, and lawsuits, and would sacrifice any property they might have, to meet punctually an obligation. Fond of amusements, their social meetings, though of most primitive character, were frequent and cordial. They observed strictly the exactions of the Church, especially Lent; but indulged the Carnival to its wildest extent. Out of Lent they met to dance and enjoy themselves, weekly, first at one, and then at another neighbor's house; and with the natural taste of their race, they would appear neatly and cleanly dressed in the attire fabricated by their own hands in the loom and with the needle.

The method of invitation to these reunions was simple and speedy. A youth on his pony would take a small wand, and tie to its top end a red or white flag, and ride up and down the bayou, from the house where the ball was intended, for two or three miles; returning, tie the wand and flag to flaunt above the gate, informing all – *«This is the place.»* All were welcome who came, and everything was conducted with strict regard to decent propriety. Nothing boisterous was ever known

—no disputing or angry wrangling, for there was no cause given; harmony and happiness pervaded all, and at proper time and in a proper manner all returned to their homes.

Marriages, almost universally, were celebrated at the church, as in all Catholic countries. The parsonage is at the church, and the priest always on hand, at the altar or the grave; and almost daily, in this dense population, a marriage or funeral was seen at the church. It was the custom for the bride and groom, with a party of friends, all on horseback, to repair without ceremony to the church, where they were united in matrimony by the good priest, who kissed the bride, a privilege he never failed to put into execution, when he blessed the couple, received his fee, and sent them away rejoicing. This ceremony was short, and without ostentation; and then the happy and expectant pair, often on the same horse, would return with the party as they had come, with two or three musicians playing the violin in merry tunes on horseback, as they joyfully galloped home, where a ball awaited them at night, and all went merry with the married belle.

These people are Iberian in race, are small in stature, of dark complexion, with black eyes, and lank black hair; their hands and feet are small, and beautifully formed, and their features regular and handsome; many of their females are extremely beautiful. These attain maturity very early, and are frequently married at thirteen years of age. In more than one instance, I have known a grandmother at thirty. As in all warm countries, this precocious maturity is followed with rapid decay. Here, persons at forty wear the appearance of those in colder climates of sixty years. Notwithstanding this apparent early loss of vigor, the instances of great longevity are perhaps more frequent in Louisiana than in any other State of the Union. This, however, can hardly be said of her native population: emigrants from high latitudes, who come after maturity, once acclimated, seem to endure the effects of climate here with more impunity than those native to the soil.

The Bayou Plaquemine formerly discharged an immense amount of water into the lakes intervening between the La Fourche and the Teche. These lakes have but a narrow strip of cultivable land. Along the right margin of the La Fourche, and the left of the Teche, they serve as a receptacle for the waters thrown from the plantations and those discharged by the Atchafalayah and the Plaquemine, which ultimately find their way to the Gulf through Berwick's Bay. They are interspersed with small islands: these have narrow strips of tillable land, but are generally too low for cultivation; and when the Mississippi is at flood, they are all under water, and most of them many feet. The La Fourche goes immediately to the Gulf, between Lake Barataria and these lakes, affording land high enough, when protected as they now are, for settlement, and cultivation to a very great extent. Its length is some one hundred miles, and the settlements extend along it for eighty miles. These are continuous, and nowhere does the forest intervene.

At irregular distances between these Acadian settlements, large sugar plantations are found. These have been extending for years, and increasing, absorbing the habitats of these primitive and innocent people, who retire to some little ridge of land deeper in the swamp, a few inches higher than the plane of the swamp, where they surround their little mud-houses with an acre or so of open land, from the products of which, and the trophies of the gun and fishing-line and hook, and an occasional frog, and the abundance of crawfish, they contrive to eke out a miserable livelihood, and afford the fullest illustration of the adage, «Where ignorance is bliss, it is folly to be wise.»

The contrast between these princely estates, and the palatial mansions which adorn them, and make a home of luxuriant beauty, and the little log huts, their immediate neighbors, tells at once that the population is either very rich or very poor, and that under such circumstances the communication must be extremely limited; for the ignorance of the poor unfits them for social and intelligent intercourse with their more wealthy and more cultivated neighbors. This is true whether the planter is French or American. The remarkable salubrity of the climate, combined with the comforts and luxuries of home, causes the planter to spend most of his time there, where he can give his attention to his business and mingle with his brother planters in a style and manner peculiar to Louisiana and the tastes of her people. Intercommunication is facilitated by steamboat travel, and as every plantation is located upon a navigable stream, the planter and family can at any time suiting his business go with little trouble to visit his friends, though they may be hundreds of miles apart. Similarity of pursuit and interest draw these together. There is no rivalry, and consequently no jealousy between them. All their relations are harmonious, and their intercourse during the summer is continuous, for at that season the business of the plantation may be safely trusted to a manager, one of whom is found on every plantation.

This social intercourse is highly promotive of a general amity, as it cultivates an intimacy which at once familiarizes every one with the feelings, situation, and intentions of the other. Sometimes the contiguity of plantations enables the families of planters to exchange formal morning and evening calls, but most generally the distance to be overgone is too great for this. Then the visiting is done by families, and extends to days, and sometimes weeks. Provisions are so abundant that the extra consumption is never missed, and the residences are always of such dimensions that the visitors seem scarcely to increase the family—never to be in the way; and the suits of apartments occupied by them were built and furnished for the purpose to which they are then devoted. The visitor is at home. The character of the hospitality he is enjoying permits him to breakfast from seven till ten, alone, or in company with the family if he chooses. Horses, dogs, and guns for the gentlemen—billiards, the carriage, music, or promenading, with cards, chess, backgammon, or dominos for the ladies, to pass away the day until dinner. At this meal the household and guests unite, and the rich viands, wines, and coffee make a feast for the body and sharpen the wit to a feast of the soul. This society is the freest and most refined to be found in the country.

Upon the coast of the Mississippi, from Baton Rouge to many miles below the city, the proximity of the large plantations presents an opportunity of close and constant intercourse. A very large majority of these are the property and habitations of the cultivated and intelligent Creoles of the State. And here let me explain the term Creole, which has led to so many ludicrous, and sometimes to painful mistakes. It is an arbitrary term, and imported from the West Indies into Louisiana. Its original meaning was a native born of foreign parents; but universal use has made it to mean, in Louisiana, nothing more than simply «native;» and it is applied indiscriminately to everything native to the State—as creole cane, creole horse, creole negro, or creole cow. Many confound its meaning with that of quadroon, and suppose it implies one of mixed blood, or one with whose blood mingles that of the African – than which no meaning is more foreign to the word.

The Creole planters, or what are termed French Creoles, are descended from a very different race from the Acadian Creole, or Iberian. The first colonists who came to Louisiana were men of the first blood and rank in France. The Ibervilles, the Bienvilles, St. Denises, and many others, were of noble descent; and the proud prestige of their names and glorious deeds still clings around their descendants now peopling the lands they conquered from the desert, the savage, and the flood. These daring men brought with them the chivalrous spirit which descended to their sons – the open, gallant bearing; the generous hospitality; the noble humanity; the honor which prefers death to a stain, and the soul which never stoops to a lie, a fraud, or a meanness degrading to a gentleman. They have been born upon the banks of the great river of the world; they have seen all the developments of talent, time, and enterprise which have made their country great as the river through which it flows. Accustomed from infancy to look upon this scene and these developments, their souls with their ideas have been sublimated, and they are a population unsurpassed in the higher attributes of humanity, and the nobler sympathies of man, by any on the face of the earth – surrounded by wealth, tangible and substantial, descending from generation to generation, affording to each all the blessings wealth can give.

The spirit of hospitality and independence has ennobled the sons, as hereditary wealth and privilege had the sires who planted this colony. These sires laid the foundation of this wealth, in securing for their posterity the broad acres of this fat land where now they are to be found. None have emigrated: conscious of possessing the noblest heritage upon earth, they have remained to eliminate from this soil the wealth which in such abundance they possess. As they were reared, they have reared their sons; the lessons of truth, virtue, honor have borne good fruit. None can say they ever knew a French Creole a confirmed drunkard or a professional gambler. None ever knew an aberration of virtue in a daughter of one.

The high-bred Creole lady is a model of refinement – modest, yet free in her manners; chaste in her thoughts and deportment; generous in her opinions, and full of charity; highly cultivated intellectually and by association; familiar from travel with the society of Europe; mistress of two, and frequently of half a dozen languages, versed in the literature of all. Accustomed from infancy to deport themselves as ladies, with a model before them in their mothers, they grow up with an elevation of sentiment and a propriety of deportment which distinguishes them as the most refined and polished ladies in the whole country. There is with these a softness of deportment and delicacy of expression, an abstinence from all violent and boisterous expressions of their feelings and sentiments, and above all, the entire freedom from petty scandal, which makes them lovely, and to be loved by every honorable and high-bred gentleman who may chance to know them and cultivate their association. Indeed, this is a characteristic of the gentlemen as well as the ladies.

These people may have a feud, and sometimes they do; but this rarely remains long unsettled. No one will ever hear it publicly alluded to, and assuredly they will never hear it uttered in slanderous vituperation of the absent party. I may be permitted here to narrate an incident illustrative of this peculiarity.

A gentleman, knowing of a dissension between two parties, was dining with one of them, in company with several others. This guest spoke to the hostess disparagingly of the enemy of her husband, who, hearing the remark, rebuked his officious guest by remarking to him: «Doctor, my lady and myself would prefer to find out the foibles and sins of our neighbors ourselves.» The rebuke was effectual, and informed the doctor, who was new in the country, of an honorable feeling in the refined population of the land of his adoption alien to that of his birth, and which he felt made these people the superior of all he had ever known.

No one has ever travelled upon one of those palatial steamers abounding on the Mississippi, in the spring season of the year, when the waters swell to the tops of the levees, lifting the steamer above the level of the great fields of sugar-cane stretching away for miles to the forest on either bank of that mighty river, who has not been delighted with the lovely homes, surrounded with grounds highly cultivated and most beautifully ornamented with trees, shrubs, and flowers, which come upon the view in constant and quick succession, as he is borne onward rapidly along the accumulated waters of the great river. This scene extends one hundred and fifty miles up the river, and is one not equalled in the world. The plain is continuous and unbroken; nor hill nor stream intersects it but at two points, where the Plaquemine and La Fourche leave it to find a nearer way to the sea; and these are so diminutive, in comparison with all around, that they are passed almost always without being seen.

The fringe of green foliage which is presented by the trees and shrubs adorning each homestead, follows in such rapid succession as to give it a continuous line, in appearance, to the passers-by on the steamer. These, denuded of timber to the last tree, the immense fields, only separated by a ditch, or fence, which spread along the river—all greened with the luxuriant sugar-cane, and other crops, growing so vigorously as at once to satisfy the mind that the richness of the soil is supreme—and this scene extending for one hundred and fifty miles, makes it unapproachable by any other cultivated region on the face of the globe. Along the Ganges and the Nile, the plain is extensive. The desolate appearance it presents—the miserable homes of the population, devoid of every ornament, without comfort or plenty in their appearance—the stinted and sparse crops, the intervening deserts of sand, the waste of desolation, spreading away far as the eye can reach—the streams contemptible in comparison, and the squalid, degraded, thriftless people along their banks, make it painful to the beholder, who is borne on his way in some dirty little craft, contrasting so strangely with the Mississippi steamer. Yet, in admirable keeping with everything else, all these present a grand contrast to the valley of the Mississippi, and only prove the latter has no equal in all that pertains to grandeur, beauty, and abundance, on the globe. To appreciate all these, you must know and mingle with the population who have thus ornamented, with labor and taste, the margin of this stream of streams.

As this great expanse of beauty is a fairyland to the eye, so is the hospitality of its homes a delight to the soul. In this population, if nowhere else in America, is seen a contented and happy people—a people whose pursuit is happiness, and not the almighty dollar. Unambitious of that distinction which only wealth bestows, they are content with an abundance for all their comforts, and for the comfort of those who, as friends or neighbors, come to share it with them. Unambitious of political distinction, despising the noisy tumult of the excited populace, they love their homes, and cultivate the ease of quiet in these delicious retreats, enjoying life as it passes, in social and elegant intercourse with each other, nor envying those who rush into the busy world and hunt gain or distinction from the masses, through the shrewdness of a wit cultivated and debased by trade, or a fawning, insincere sycophancy toward the dirty multitude they despise. By such, these people are considered anomalous, devoid of energy or enterprise, contented with what they have, nor ambitious for more – which, to an American, with whom, if the earth is obtained, the moon must be striven for, is stranger than all else – living indolently at their ease, regardless of ephemeral worldly distinctions, but happy in the comforts of home, and striving only to make this a place for the enjoyment of themselves and those about them.

To the stranger they are open and kind, universally hospitable, never scrutinizing his whole man to learn from his manner or dress whether he comes as a gentleman or a sharper, or whether he promises from appearance to be of value to them pecuniarily in a trade. There is nothing of the huckster in their natures. They despise trade, because it degrades; they have only their crops for sale, and this they trust to their factors; they never scheme to build up chartered companies for gain, by preying upon the public; never seek to overreach a neighbor or a stranger, that they may increase their means by decreasing his; would scorn the libation of generous wine, if they felt the tear of the widow or the orphan mingled with it, and a thousand times would prefer to be cheated than to cheat; despising the vicious, and cultivating only the nobler attributes of the soul.

Such is the character of the educated French Creole planters of Louisiana – a people freer from the vices of the age, and fuller of the virtues which ennoble man, than any it has fallen to my lot to find in the peregrinations of threescore years and ten. The Creoles, and especially the Creole planters, have had little communication with any save their own people. The chivalry of character, in them so distinguising a trait, they have preserved as a heritage from their ancestors, whose history reads more like a romance than the lives and adventures of men, whose nobility of soul and mind was theirs from a long line of ancestors, and brought with them to be planted on the Mississippi in the character of their posterity.

Is it the blood, the rearing, or the religion of these people which make them what they are? They are full of passion; yet they are gentle and forbearing toward every one whom they suppose does not desire to wrong or offend them; they are generous and unexacting, abounding in the charity of the heart, philanthropic, and seemingly from instinct practising toward all the world all the Christian virtues. They are brave, and quick to resent insult or wrong, and prefer death to dishonor; scrupulously just in all transactions with their fellow-men, forbearing toward the foibles of others, without envy, and without malice. In their family intercourse they are respectful and kind, and particularly to their children: they are cautious never to oppress or mortify a child – directing the parental authority first to the teaching of the heart, then to the mind – instilling what are duties with a tenderness and gentleness which win the affections of the child to perform these through love only. Propriety of deportment toward their seniors and toward each other is instilled from infancy and observed through life. All these lessons are stamped upon the heart, not only by the precepts of parents and all about them, but by their example.

The negro servants constitute a part of every household, and are identified with the family as part of it. To these they are very kind and forebearing, as also to their children, to whom they uniformly speak and act gently. A reproof is never given in anger to either, nor in public, for the purpose of mortifying, but always in private, and gently – in sorrow rather than in anger; and where punishment must be resorted to, it is done where only the parent or master, and the child or servant, can see or know it. This is the example of the Church. The confessional opens up to the priest the errors of the penitent, and they are rebuked and forgiven in secret, or punished by the imposition of penalties known only to the priest and his repentant parishioner. Is it this which makes such models of children and Christians in the educated Creole population of Louisiana? or is it the instinct of race, the consequence of a purer and more sublimated nature from the blue blood of the exalted upon earth? The symmetry of form, the delicacy of feature in the males, their manliness of bearing, and the high chivalrous spirit, as well as the exquisite beauty and grace of their women, with the chaste purity of their natures, would seem to indicate this as the true reason.

All who have ever entered a French Creole family have observed the gentle and respectful bearing of the children, their strict yet unconstrained observance of all the proprieties of their position, and also the affectionate intercourse between these and their parents, and toward each other – never an improper word; never an improper action; never riotous; never disobedient. They approach you with confidence, yet with modesty, and are respectful even in the mirth of childish play. Around the mansions of these people universally are pleasure-grounds, permeated with delightful promenades through parterres of flowers and lawns of grass, covered with the delicious shade thrown from the extended limbs and dense foliage of the great trees. These children, when wandering here, never trespass upon a parterre or pluck unbidden a flower, being restrained only by a sense of propriety and decency inculcated from the cradle, and which grows with their growth, and at maturity is part of their nature. Could children of Anglo-Norman blood be so restrained? Would the wild energies of these bow to such control, or yield such obedience from restraint or love? Certainly in their deportment they are very different, and seem only to yield to authority from fear of punishment, and dash away into every kind of mischief the moment this is removed. Nor is this fear and certainty of infliction of punishment in most cases found to be of sufficient force to restrain these inherent proclivities.

Too frequently with such as these the heart-training in childhood is neglected or forgotten, and they learn to do nothing from love as a duty to God and their fellow-beings. The good priest comes not as a minister of peace and love into the family; but is too frequently held up by the thoughtless parent as a terror, not as a good and loving man, to be loved, honored, and revered, and these are too frequently the raw-head and bloody-bones painted to the childish imagination by those parents who regard the rod as the only reformer of childish errors – who forget the humanities in inspiring the brutalities of parental discipline, as well as the pastoral duties of their vocation. They persuade not into fruit the blossoms of the heart, but crush out the delicate sensibilities from the child's soul by coarse reproofs and brutal bearing toward them. The causes of difference I cannot devine, but I know that the facts exist, and I know the difference extends to the adults of the two races.

The Anglo-American is said to be more enterprising, more energetic and progressive—seeks dangers to overcome them, and subdues the world to his will. The Gallic or French-American is less enterprising, yet sufficiently so for the necessary uses of life. He is more honest and less speculative; more honorable and less litigious; more sincere with less pretension; superior to trickery or low intrigue; more open and less designing; of nobler motives and less hypocrisy; more refined and less presumptuous, and altogether a man of more chivalrous spirit and purer aspirations. The Anglo-American commences to succeed, and will not scruple at the means: he uses any and all within his power, secures success, and this is called enterprise combined with energy. Moral considerations are a slight obstacle. They may cause him to hesitate, but never restrain his action. The maxim is ever present to his mind: it is honorable and respectable to succeed—dishonorable and disreputable to fail; it is only folly to yield a bold enterprise to nice considerations of moral right. If he can avoid the penalties of the civil law, success obviates those of the moral law. Success is the balm for every wrong—the passport to every honor.

«His race may be a line of thieves,
His acts may strike the soul with horror;
Yet infamy no soiling leaves—
The rogue to-day's the prince to-morrow.»

This demoralizes: the expedient for the just—that which will do, not that which should do, if success requires, must be resorted to. This idea, like the pestilence which rides the breeze, reaches every heart, and man's actions are governed only by the law—not by a high moral sense of right. Providence, it is supposed, prepares for all exigencies in the operations of nature. If this be true, it may be that the peculiarities of blood, and the consequence to human character, may, in the Anglo-American, be specially designed for his mission on this continent; for assuredly he is the eminently successful man in all enterprises which are essential in subduing the earth, and aiding in the spreading of his race over this continent. Every opposition to his progress fails, and the enemies of this progress fall before him, and success is the result of his every effort. That the French Creoles retain the chivalry and noble principles of their ancestry is certainly true; but that they have failed to preserve the persevering enterprise of their ancestors is equally true.

Emigration from France, to any considerable extent, was stayed after the cessation of Louisiana to the United States, and the French settlements ceased to expand. The country along and north of Red River, on the Upper Mississippi and the Washita, was rapidly filled up with a bold, hardy American population, between whom and the French sparsely peopling the country about Natchitoches on the Red, and Monroe on the Washita River, there was little or no sympathy; and the consequence was that many of those domiciled already in these sections left, and returned to the Lower Mississippi, or went back to France.

There had been, anterior to this cession, two large grants of land made to the Baron de Bastrop and the Baron de Maison Rouge, upon the Washita and Bartholomew, including almost the entire extent of what is now two parishes. These grants were made by the European Government upon condition of settlement within a certain period. The Revolution in France was expelling many of her noblest people, and the Marquis de Breard, with many followers, was one of these: he came, and was the pioneer to these lands. A nucleus formed, and accessions were being made, but the government being transferred and the country becoming Americanized, this tide of immigration was changed from French to American, and the requisite number of settlers to complete the grants was not reached within the stipulated period, and they were, after more than half a century, set aside, and the lands disposed of as public lands by the United States Government. Had the government continued in the hands of France, it is more than probable that the titles to these tracts would never have been contested, even though the requisite number of settlers had not been upon the lands to complete the grants at the specified period; and it is also probable there would have been, in proper time, the required number. But this transfer of dominion was exceedingly distasteful to the French population.

The antagonism of races itself is a great difficulty in the way of amalgamation, even though both may belong to the same great division of the human family; but added to this the difference of language, laws, habits, and religion, it would almost seem impossible. In the instance of Louisiana it has, so far, proved impossible. Although the French have been American subjects for more than sixty years, and there now remain in life very few who witnessed the change, and notwithstanding this population has, so far as the government is concerned, become thoroughly Americanized, still they remain to a very great extent a distinct people. Even in New Orleans they have the French part and the American part of the city, and do not, to any very great degree, extend their union by living among each other. Kind feelings exist between the populations, and the prejudices which have so effectually kept them apart for so long a time are giving way rapidly now, since most of the younger portion of the Creole-French population are educated in the United States, and away from New Orleans; consequently they speak the English language and form American associations, imbibe American ideas, and essay to rival American enterprise. Still there is a distinct difference in appearance. Perhaps the difference in bearing, and in other characteristics, may be attributable to early education, but the first and most radical is surely that of blood.

The settlements upon the Red and Washita Rivers did not augment the French population in the country; it has declined, but more signally upon the latter than the former river. There remain but few families there of the ancient population, and these are now so completely Americanized as scarcely to be distinguishable. The descendants of the Marquis de Breard, in one or two families, are there, but all who located on the Bayou Des Arc (and here was the principal settlement), with perhaps one family only, are gone, and the stranger is in their homes.

The French character seems to want that fixity of purpose, that self-denial, and steady perseverance, which is so necessary to those who would colonize and subdue a new and inhospitable country. The elevated civilization of the French has long accustomed them to the refinements and luxuries of life; it has entered into and become a part of their natures, and they cannot do violence to this in a sufficient degree to encounter the wilderness and all its privations, or to create from this wilderness those luxuries, and be content in their enjoyment for all the hardships endured in procuring them: they shrink away from these, and prefer the inconveniences and privations of a crowded community with its enjoyments, even in poverty, to the rough and trying troubles which surround and distress the pioneer, who pierces the forest and makes him a home, which, at least, promises all the comforts of wealth and independence to his posterity. He rather prefers to take care that he enjoys as he desires the present, and leaves posterity to do as they prefer. Yet there are many instances of great daring and high enterprise in the French Creole: these are the exceptions, not the rule.

WHO ARE THE CREOLES?

By George W. Cable

What is a Creole? Even in Louisiana the question would be variously answered. The title did not, here, first belong to the descendants of Spanish, but of French settlers. But such a meaning implied a certain excellence of origin, and so came early to include any native, of French or Spanish descent by either parents, whose non-alliance with the slave race entitled him to social rank. Later, the term was adopted by—not conceded to—the natives of mixed blood, and is still so used among themselves. At length the spirit of commerce saw the money-value of so honored a title, and broadened its meaning to take in any creature or thing of variety of manufacture peculiar to Louisiana that might become an object of sale: as Creole ponies, chickens, cows, shoes, eggs, wagons, baskets, cabbages, negroes, etc. Yet the Creoles proper will not share their distinction with the worthy «Acadian.» He is a Creole only by courtesy, and in the second person singular. Besides French and Spanish, there are even, for the convenience of speech, «colored» Creoles; but there are no Italian, or Sicilian, nor any English, Scotch, Irish, or «Yankee» Creoles, unless of parentage married into, and themselves thoroughly proselyted in, Creole society. Neither Spanish nor American domination has taken from the Creoles their French vernacular. This, also, is part of their title; and, in fine, there seems to be no more serviceable definition of the Creoles of Louisiana than this: that they are the French-Speaking, native, ruling class.

There is no need to distinguish between the higher and humbler grades of those from whom they sprang. A few settlers, only, were persons of rank and station. Many were the children of the casket-girls, and many were of such stock as society pronounces less than nothing; yet, in view of that state of society which the French revolution later overturned, any present overplus of honor may as well fall to the children of those who filled the prisons before, as of those who filled them during that bloody convulsion.

In the days of De Vaudreuil, the dwellings of the better class that had stood at first on the immediate front of the town, or on the first street behind, seem to have drawn back a square or two. They were also spreading toward and out through a gate in the palisade wall near its north corner. Bayou Road, now a street of the city, issued from this gate northward to the village and bayou of St. John. Along this suburban way, surrounded by broad grounds, deeply shaded with live-oaks, magnolias, and other evergreen forest trees, and often having behind them plantations of indigo or myrtle, rose the wide, red-roofed, but severely plain frame dwellings of the rich, generally of one or one and a half stories, but raised on pillars often fifteen feet from the ground, and surrounded by wide verandas.

In the lofty halls and spacious drawing-rooms of these homes—frequently, too, in the heart of the town, in the houses of the humblest exterior, their low, single-story wooden or brick walls rising from a ground but partly drained even of its storm water, infested with reptile life and frequently overflowed—was beginning to be shown a splendor of dress and personal adornment hardly in harmony with the rude simplicity of apartments and furniture and scarcely to be expected in a town of unpaved, unlighted, and often impassable streets, surrounded by swamps and morasses on one of the wildest American frontiers.

Slaves—not always or generally the dull, ill-featured Congo or fierce Banbara, imported for the plantations, but comely Jalaff and Mandingo boys and girls, the shapelier for their scanty dress—waited on every caprice, whether good or ill. New Orleans had been the one colonized spot in the delta where slaves were few, but now they rapidly became numerous, and black domestic service made it easy for the Creoles to emulate the ostentatious living of the colonial officials.

To their bad example in living, these dignitaries, almost without exception, added that of corruption in office. Governors, royal commissaries, post-commandants,—the Marchioness de Vaudreuil conspicuously,—and many lesser ones, stood boldly accusing and accused of the grossest and the pettiest misdemeanors. Doubtless the corruption was exaggerated; yet the testimony is official, abundant, and corroborative, and is verified in the ruinous expenses which at length drove France to abandon the maintenance and sovereignty of the colony she had misgoverned for sixty-three years.

Meanwhile, public morals were debased; idleness and intemperance were general; speculation in the depreciated paper money which flooded the colony became the principal business, and insolvency the common condition.

Religion and education made poor headway. Almost the only item in their history is a «war of the Jesuits and Capuchins.» Its «acrimonious writings, squibs, and pasquinades» made much heat for years. Its satirical songs were heard, it appears, in the drawing-rooms as well as in the street; for the fair sex took sides in it with lively zeal. In July, 1763, the Capuchins were left masters of the field. The decree of the French parliament had the year before ordered the Jesuits' expulsion from the realm; their wide plantations just beyond the town walls being desirable, the Creole «Superior Council» became bold, and the lands already described as the site of the richest district in the present New Orleans were confiscated and sold for 180,000 dollars.

In this same year, a flag, not seen there before, began to appear in the yellow harbor of New Orleans. In February, a treaty between England, France, and Spain, gave Great Britain all that immense part of the Mississippi Valley east of the river and north of Orleans Island. The Delta remained to France and to her still vast province of Louisiana. The navigation of the Mississippi was made free to the subjects of both empires alike. Trade with British vessels was forbidden the French colonies; yet a lively commerce soon sprang up with them at a point just above the plantations of the dispossessed Jesuits, afterward the river front of the city of Lafayette, and now of the Fourth District of New Orleans.

Here numerous trading vessels, sailing under the British flag, ascending the river and passing the town on the pretext of visiting the new British posts of Manchac and Baton Rouge, landed and carried on a commerce with the merchants of the post they had just passed by.

The corrupt authorities winked at a practice that brought wealth to all, and the getting of honest rights by disingenuous and dishonest courses became the justified habit of the highest classes and the leading minds. The slave trade, too, received an unfortunate stimulus: a large business was done at this so-called «Little Manchac,» in Guinea negroes, whom the colonist bought of the English.

The governor of Louisiana at this time was Kerlerec, a distinguished captain in the French navy. He had succeeded the Marquis in 1753, and had now governed the province for ten years. But he had lately received orders to return to France and render account of his conduct in office. A work of retrenchment was begun. The troops were reduced to three hundred. In June, a M. d'Abbadie landed in New Orleans, commissioned to succeed the governor under the shorn honors and semi-commercial title of director-general. Kerlerec, sailing to France, was cast into the Bastille and «died of grief shortly after his release.»

The Creoles noted, with much agitation, these and other symptoms of some unrevealed design to alter their political condition. By and by, rumor of what had secretly been transacted began to reach their ears in the most offensive shape. Yet, for a time, M. d'Abbadie himself remained officially as uninformed as they; and it was only in October, 1764, twenty-three months after the signing of a secret act at Fontainebleau, that the authoritative announcement reached New Orleans of her cession, with all of French Louisiana, to the king of Spain.

Such is the origin, surrounding influences, and resulting character and life of the earliest Creoles of Louisiana. With many influences against them, they rose from a chaotic condition below the plane of social order to the station of a proud, freedom-loving, agricultural and commercial people, who, shortly after the date with which these chapters close, struck the first armed blow ever aimed by Americans against a royal decree.

Their descendants would be a community still more unique than they are, had they not the world-wide trait of a pride of ancestry. But they might as easily be excused for boasting of other things which they have overlooked. A pride of ascent would be as well grounded; and it will be pleasant if we are permitted to show in later papers that the decadence imputed to them, sometimes even by themselves, has no foundation in fact, but that their course, instead, has been, in the main, upward from first to last, and so continues to-day.

ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE IN NEW ORLEANS
January 1–3, 1832

By G. W. Pierson

The discovery and translation of more than forty original letters, fourteen small pocket diaries, and a mass of subsidiary manuscript in the hand of the great French commentator Alexis de Tocqueville (all of these documents penned in America, and some three years before the appearance of his famous *De la Démocratie en Amérique*) now for the first time makes possible the approach to an interesting story.

Americans just this past year have been celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of Tocqueville's classic treatise (Paris, January, 1835). The last few months have likewise seen the rebirth of the ancient interest and faith in what Alexis de Tocqueville once said about American democracy. Thoughtful and troubled students of government today seem to be turning for guidance in increasing numbers back to the past, and more especially back to Tocqueville's own prophetic pages. Yet what were the origins of this great Frenchman's thought? Must not some strange, intense experiences have preceded the writing of an American commentary that would at once become the authority in its field and would afterwards carry persuasion across one hundred years?

Students have long known, rather vaguely, that Tocqueville once came to America: In 1831-32, together with a friend and fellow magistrate Gustave de Beaumont, he had been sent to the United States by the government of Louis Philippe to investigate our celebrated new penitentiary reforms. And the two Commissioners of France had stayed nine months. But if they travelled, and perhaps studied other things than prisons during their obscure sojourn, the details had never come to light. Where did they go? What did they do? Whom did they see? Tocqueville's book did not say. It discussed institutions and political theory, not personal contacts and adventures. How had they come to know the America of Andrew Jackson's day so intimately that they could even prophesy its future? The story existed, it was recorded in their own manuscripts, even, but somehow that story was never told.

Herewith, then, is published a small fragment from an extraordinary experience and adventure. Only an episode, and that not the most important, has been selected. Yet it may serve to illustrate. In this instance the original documents relate the visit of Tocqueville and Beaumont to the still almost foreign city of New Orleans, midway through the bitter winter of 1831-32. In late November the two youthful[1] friends, their prison studies in Philadelphia completed, had set on a tour of investigation down the Ohio and Mississippi valleys. As students wandering in the northern states since May, they had already made up their minds about a great number of things; but about New Orleans and Louisiana they knew almost nothing. Unfortunately an ice-filled river at Memphis, following on a run of unforeseen accidents, so delayed them that the time set aside for their southern tour was almost gone. Furthermore, they had the bad luck to step ashore at New Orleans on the one almost inviolable day of the year: on New Year's day! One sees them, therefore, half humorously and mocking their own innocence, half in deadly earnest as became two philosophers who would fathom and absorb all America, engaging desperately in the preposterous attempt to understand New Orleans in a single day.

«24 Heures à la Nouvelle Orléans»[2]

«You know, my dear friend,» Tocqueville began the story of his latest adventures very solemnly, «You know, my dear friend, that our intention was, on leaving Philadelphia, to go to New Orleans and pass two weeks there but, shipwrecked at Wheeling, stopped by the ice at Louisville, held back ten days in Memphis, we were a hundred times on the point of giving up the trip that we had undertaken. We were going to turn back on our steps when the twenty-fifth of December (note well the dates, they are precious) a steamboat took us on board and offered to carry us down to Louisiana.

«After all our calculations were made there remained of our two weeks not more than three days to pass in New Orleans. What was there to do, however? We had to submit.

«We set out then: but you see the implacability of fortune. In the night of the 26-27 December, in the most beautiful moonlight that ever lit up the solitary banks of the Mississippi, our boat suddenly touched bottom and, after tottering a while like a drunken man, established herself tranquilly on the bar. To describe our despair at this affair would in truth be a difficult matter: we prayed to the heavens which said not a word, then to the captain who sent us to the pilot. As to the latter, he received us like a potentate. After having blown a cloud of smoke in our faces, he observed peacefully that the sands of the Mississippi were like the French and could not stay a year in the same place. The comparison, you will admit, was insolent enough to be chastised, but he was on his own ground and we were on a ladder; we therefore came down to await the efforts which the crew were going to make to get us out of the desperate condition in which we found ourselves. We stayed there two days. At the end of that time they finally succeeded in tearing us loose from the sand and the first of January, 1832, the sun rising in a brilliant tropical sky revealed to us New Orleans across the masts of a thousand ships.

«We disembarked hastily, as you will readily conceive. There was no time to lose: to make the acquaintance of all those to whom we had been recommended, to enjoy the pleasures, so celebrated, of New Orleans, to study the laws, learn the usages, enter into the *mœurs*, to know the statistics and history of the country. Only 24 hours remained to us: I defy you to add a single minute, but don't go and judge us too harshly. Know that 24 hours usefully employed teach many things. I have this maxim from a young attaché of the French embassy with whom I talked the other day. He appeared to speak very pertinently of England. An Englishman present insisted that it was very impertinent but I, who saw that he was cutting into the quick at every stroke and that he had already made up his mind about everything in that country; I began to be seized with admiration and I asked him that minute how long he had passed among our neighbors. One week, he replied.[3] I appeared surprised, I had not then my present experience. Seeing my astonishment he added with that air at the same time mysterious and engaging, deep and light– with a diplomatic air[4] in a word: one week, when one knows how to observe, is sufficient for many things. There's my excuse. If one week is indeed sufficient for a superior man to have an opinion upon the British Empire and all her colonies, it is clear that a man of an inferior capacity can still hope to learn something of New Orleans in 24 hours.

«Besides, we had no choice. After we had laid out our best clothes, therefore, we tried to introduce into our dress as much as possible a happy mixture of the Philosopher and the man of the world. We were under the necessity, without being able to return to our quarters during the whole course of a long day, of being alternately very deep and very amiable. We put on a black tie for the members of the legislature, a white vest (*gilet*) for the women, we took in our hand a little swagger stick to raise us into intimacy with the fashionable world, and, very contented with ourselves, we descended the stairs. There the difficulty of putting order into our activities presented itself for the first time to our mind:

«We established ourselves on a curbstone as a deliberating assembly and after a discussion which lasted an hour we adopted the following plan. We made an infinite number of classifications. We created principles of observation, then we made deductions from our principles, then deductions from our deductions; we discussed, classified, and unclassified for an hour and noon was smiling upon us when we finally adopted the following plan: You see that I possess indeed the style of the *procès-verbal*:

«We resolved to consecrate two hours to an examination of the city, to knowing the external appearance, to seeing the character of its population, to studying the most apparent aspects of its morals and its customs.

«A short visit to our consul would bring us to three o'clock. There would then remain for us four hours of daylight during which we would visit all the celebrated men, legislators, publicists, lawyers, poets and orators of New Orleans. Between these calls we would insert visits to the most beautiful women solely for the purpose of resting ourselves, I swear.

«At 7 o'clock we would go to the play. After the play would come the *bal*. At midnight we would go back to our lodgings to organize our notes. Has this plan your approbation? It received ours and we set out.»

«Coup d'œil de la Nouvelle Orléans. . .»

The «blow of an eye» at New Orleans Tocqueville never described. Apparently he was interrupted at this point in his writing and, when next he had an opportunity, resumed with a later part of their twenty-four hours. In the end he never returned to the middle portion of his sketch. It is wanting entirely.

What he and Beaumont saw, therefore, and particularly what they thought during the course of their hasty midday promenade through the streets of New Orleans, can only be surmised from two documents of an entirely different nature. The first is a sort of stenographic note on their whole day, evidently taken to recall the chief sights and their personal impressions: the second a comment buried in their prison notes.

«Fine houses, huts; streets muddy and unpaved. Spanish architecture, flat English roofs. Bricks, small French doorways, massive *portes-cochères*,» Tocqueville was to jot down at the end of a diary.[5]

«Population similarly mixed, faces of all shades of color. Language French, English, Spanish, creole. General appearance French; and yet signs, commercial posters usually in English. Industrial and trading world, American. . .»

That was all. Except that in their penitentiary report Tocqueville and Beaumont would one day write:[6]

«We would be unable to paint the dolorous impression that we received when, on examining the prison of New Orleans, we saw there men thrown in pell-mell with swine, in the midst of excrement and filth. In locking up criminals, no thought is given to making them better but simply to taming their wickedness; they are chained like wild beasts; they are not refined but brutalized.»

And in a footnote the two commissioners would insist: «The place containing condemned criminals in New Orleans could not by any stretch of the imagination be called a prison: it's a frightful cesspool into which they are dumped and which is suitable only for those unclean animals one finds there with them. It is noteworthy that all those detained there are not slaves: it's the prison of free men. . .»

«The course of our observations,» Tocqueville resumed his interrupted narrative, «had led us to the door of our consul whose name I am able to say: M. Guillemain.[7] We knocked. The negro who opened the door seemed completely surprised that we should wish to visit his master but what importance is it what goes on in a negro's head? We went in. M. Guillemain appeared in his turn surprised to see us enter his office, but he got possession of himself immediately and received us in the most polite manner. He wished first to speak with us about France, about our friends, our relatives—*C'était bien de cela en vérité qu'il s'agissait*: he believed that we had come to make a visit and that informal inquiries were in order. We, therefore, turned the conversation as decently as we could and by an adroit and well managed circuit we led him back to N.O. Finally he began to speak of it and to speak very directly. He made us feel how important it was to France for French *mœurs*, customs and habits to continue their sway in Louisiana. This has happened up to the present, he added, to such an extent that the other day the people, learning what had happened in the Church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois in Paris, remembered that a curé of the city had refused to bury a man who had committed suicide, and they ran to break his windows.[8] The consul then spoke to us of the prosperous state in which Louisiana found herself. In the 15 years I have been here, he said, the prosperity of this region has increased an hundredfold. I have seen the *quartiers* rear themselves in the midst of infested swamps, palaces replace cabins, the city increase in population in spite of the yellow fever. The same impulse is imprinted upon all the districts of the state. All are prospering, all are growing visibly, the future of Louisiana is wonderful. Ten states, in which will soon be found the strength and population of the Union, have as their only outlet the Mississip[p]i, and we hold the key to it. N.O. is the natural *entrepôt*.

«Thus spake Mr. Guillemain, and we

kept very quiet, the reason being that we were occupied in registering in our mind every one of his words. M. Guillemain, moreover, had one of those egotistical intelligences which speaks but does not converse and which finds pleasure in the sight of its own thoughts.

«Meanwhile, the hour was passing, the time of the inquest was about over. I thought that we should in departing leave one of those outstanding and deep thoughts which remain in the mind of the listener and show him that every man who keeps quiet is not necessarily a fool.

«I slid in, then, cleverly between two of his ideas and I said: the extreme prosperity of this region, of which you more than any one else have been the witness, Monsieur, commenced with the union of Louisiana with the United States. Such a coincidence tells more than all the theories in favor of republican institutions. Imagine my surprise when Mr. Guillemain, interrupting me, cried: ah Monsieur, one must live 15 years as I have done in the bosom of a small democratic republic such as this one to lose such ideas. Do you wish to have an idea of the public administration? Examine the streets of the city, what holes, what lack of order and alignment: the city, however, has more than a million of revenue. But into what hands it passes, God only knows. Do you want to have a clear-cut opinion about the wisdom of the deliberating bodies? Read the names of those who compose them, obscure people, lawyers of the third order, village intriguers. One would [be tempted to] say that [there is] a law preventing the choice of people of merit and talent. Nothing simpler. It is the lower classes of people who have the majority in the electoral colleges. They choose from their own kind. Open the acts of the sessions. It is a veritable Penelope's web. To make, unmake, remake, is the work of our legislators. The spirit not of party but of coterie absolutely directs the state. They suppress a position to ruin a man or create another to give a living to an honest friend persecuted by fortune. These, gentlemen, are the republican institutions which have made and still create every day the prosperity of Louisiana. But I am mistaken, this government has one merit that one must not deny it. Without force as it is without skill; without plans as it is without energy, incapable of harm as it is incapable of good, powerless and passive, it lets society *marcher toute seule* without trying to direct it. Well, in the present state of affairs America, in order to prosper, does not need either able leadership or deep-laid plans or great efforts, but liberty and still more liberty. The reason for that is that no one has yet any interest in abusing that liberty.

«I pray you to believe, my dear friend, that this tirade against republics had not in the least downed me, and I was going to reply vigorously; but at the moment that I opened my mouth the clock struck four.

«We hastened to take our hats and we set out congratulating ourselves that France had not yet lost the right to be represented abroad by persons worthy of her.»

«Suite de la N^{elle} Orléans

«We had, if I am not mistaken, 71 letters[9] for New Orleans. It was a difficult task only to put in order this formidable correspondence and classify each letter according to the merit of the person to whom it was addressed. But we are, as you know, of the number of those who think that, no matter how hurried one is, one cannot sacrifice too much time in favor of logic. Order finally established, we directed ourselves toward the house of a M. Mazureau[10] who had been pointed out to us as the eagle of the New Orleans bar; futhermore as speaking French, an advantage which we had learned to appreciate in our travels. We had much trouble and lost much precious time in finding his home. The houses of N.O. have no numbers or the numbers do not run in sequence at all. Number 2 precedes 1, and 30 follows 70. It is an arithmetic peculiar to the corporation of N.O. with which we were not yet acquainted. This, *du reste*, ended by giving us a real consideration for our consul. How indeed can one imagine a good government in a city where strangers cannot find the way!

«We arrived at last: the negro who opened the door for us, and of whom we made our request to see M. Mazureau, at first regarded us fixedly without having the air of understanding us. He said to us finally: 'how, Massa, to-day?' – 'And Yes without doubt Butor [Butler?] why not?'

«There was some energy in our reply but of argument not a word. The slave, however, had the air of recognizing himself vanquished and, bowing his head with a submissive air, he opened the door of the salon.

«The eagle of the N.O. bar, wrapped in the folds of a flowered dressing gown and seated tranquilly in the corner of what is called a French fireplace in Louisiana and an antique fireplace in France, was receiving at that very moment the homage of his assembled posterity.

«We saw there children, grandchildren, nephews, great-nephews, first cousins, distant cousins: the family picture was complete. Joy seemed to shine in all the faces. Union reigned in all hearts. One is such good friends the day of New Year's gifts. I do not want to add a thing to this painting for fear of moving you too much. Know at least that at this sight there is not an 18th century Philosopher who would not have wept with sensibility and tenderness.

«As for us, we remained as though struck with stupor at this spectacle: a ray of light finally managed to penetrate our intelligence. We understood now the embarrassment of the consul, the astonishment of the negroes, of the good negroes we had treated as Butors. To set out with a letter of introduction on New Year's day! What a monstrous incongruity! Alas! Where is the happy time when I would rather have forgotten my name than the arrival of the first of January? At the sight of the two unwelcome visitors M. Mazureau rose brusquely and advanced toward the door enveloping in the folds of his dressing gowns two small children who, lost in the midst of this obscure labyrinth, let out sharp cries. We on our part were hastening to go towards him, but our precipitation was fatal to several play-things which we crushed pitilessly in our course. We at last met our host in the middle of the salon and there we reciprocally assured each other of all the pleasure we had in meeting.»

At this delicate juncture, Tocqueville's sketch of their twenty-four hours in New Orleans breaks off entirely. Certain diary notes, however, supply the story for the rest of the day.

There was no headlong flight, to begin with, nor even apparently any attempt at a graceful retreat. Instead the determined young intruders showed signs of wishing to talk—and the eagle of the New Orleans bar suddenly found himself allowing his New Year's afternoon to be interrupted by quite a serious interrogation.

«Before passing under American rule, did you possess some of the forms of a free government?» was the first question he was asked.[11]

The answer seemed simple. «No,» said M. Mazureau.

«Q. Was the passage from complete subjection to entire liberty hard?»

Again the reply had to be in the negative. «No,» he said, «Congress was careful to conduct us by degrees to independence. At first it governed us in almost as absolute a way as our former governors. Then it gave us the government of a territory. Finally it put us into the Union as an independent state. We are doing as well in that role as the other provinces of the Union, even though the majority is still in the hands of the creoles. In my opinion, even, Congress could have dispensed with giving us an apprenticeship. A small state, placed as we were, is always capable of governing itself. Almost none of the evil consequences of popular sovereignty are to be feared in small societies.»

Tocqueville passed rapidly to another subject.

«Q. Do you believe that it would be possible in Louisiana for the whites to cultivate the land without slaves?»

«A. I don't think so. Yet I was born in Europe; I came here with the ideas that you appear to have on this point; but experience has seemed to me to belie the theory. I don't believe the Europeans can work in the fields exposed to the tropical sun that we have. Our sunshine is always unhealthy, often mortal. It's not that I believe the impossibility of working complete. But the white, to avoid death, is obliged to labor in a fashion so restrained that he can scarcely gain his livelihood. We have an example of this in Arkansas. Some time ago (*jadis*) Spain transported to this part of Louisiana some peasants from the Azores, who settled and remained there without slaves. These men farm the land, but so little, that they are the most miserable men of Louisiana.»

«Q. But couldn't their poverty be attributed to want of industry rather than to climate?» Tocqueville was obviously reluctant to have one of his Tennessee theories so lightly upset. But M. Mazureau was adamant.

«In my opinion, the climate is the capital cause,» he answered.

Again Tocqueville vaulted swiftly to another topic.

«They say that in New Orleans is to be found a mixture of all the nations?»

«A. That's true; you see here a mingling of all races. Not a country in America or Europe but has sent us some representatives. New Orleans is a patch-work of peoples.»

«Q. But in the midst of this confusion what race dominates and gives direction to all the rest?»

«A. The French race, up to now. It's they who set the tone and shape the *mœurs*.» That was exactly what consul Guillemain had said, and Tocqueville was reminded of another item in their earlier conversation.

«Q. Is it true that yellow fever is as much of a scourge here as supposed?»

«A. I think they exaggerate the evil. My experience has taught me that of ten foreigners who live wisely and allow themselves no excesses of any sort, but two die. I am speaking of people who do not have to work their hands in order to live. Of the same number belonging to the working classes and passing the day in the open air, perhaps seven or eight succumb. Besides, you know that the yellow fever is confined to New Orleans. Two miles above or below, no one ever has it.

«Q. What is the lot of negroes in Louisiana?»

«A. Mild enough. Harshness toward negroes is exceptional. The condition of negroes has altered singularly in the last twenty years. Before, they lived in miserable huts which did not, so to speak, protect them from the weather at all; their clothing consisted of a blanket, and for nourishment they were given a barrel of corn a month (about two bushels). Now they are in general sufficiently fed, completely clothed, and healthily lodged.»

«Q. Does the law protect their life?»

«A. Yes, I recall when I was Attorney General having a master condemned to death because he had killed his slave.»

«Evening at the theatre. . .» Tocqueville's skeleton notes for the day wound up.[12] «Strange spectacle offered by the chamber. First stalls (*loge*) white, second grey, colored women, very pretty, white ones among them, but a remainder of African blood. Third stalls black. Audience, we think ourselves in France, noisy, uproarious, turbulent, talkative, a thousand leagues away from the United States. We leave at ten. Quadroon ball. Strange sight: all the men white, all the women colored, or at least of African blood. Single tie created by immorality between the two races. A sort of bazaar. The women vowed as it were by law to concubinage. Incredible laxity of morals. Mothers, young girls, children at the dance; still another harmful consequence of slavery. Multitude of colored people at New Orleans. Small number in the North. Why? Why, of all the European races, is the English race the one that has best preserved its purity of blood and mingled least with the natives?»

In the excitement of this intellectual puzzle, Tocqueville had begun to put in his verbs again, and was actually writing in complete sentences. And he thought he had a grasp on the answer. «Besides the powerful reasons arising in national character,» he argued, «there exists one particular cause of difference. Spanish America was peopled by adventurers drawn by the thirst for gold, who planted alone the other side of the Atlantic, found themselves in some sort forced to contract unions with the women of the country they lived in. The English colonies were settled by men fleeing their country for reasons of religious passion or whose object in coming to live in the new world was to cultivate the land. They came with women and children and were able to form a complete society on the spot.»

The Second and Third Days

Their *«24 heures»* were over. When a man knew how to observe, Tocqueville had been told, even the shortest time was sufficient to teach him many things.

But, after all! When they had spent two days on a sandbar in the Mississippi and a whole week in the deserted little village of Memphis! It was too much to ask. They had caught glimpses of too many shadows in Louisiana life. They had begun to sense fascinating aspects that even their vigilant curiosity had not divined. Naturally no single day, however industriously spent, could possibly satisfy them.

So Tocqueville and Beaumont changed their plans once more, and stayed, finally, not one day but three.

One gathers that they saw the consul of France again, for further elucidation, in their own tongue, of the mysteries of Louisiana culture. Was there no bitterness arising out of the rivalries of the French population and the newly-arriving Americans from the North, for instance?

«They criticize each other mutually,» Guillemain admitted,[13] «they see very little of each other, but at bottom there is no veritable enmity. The French are not, as in Canada, a vanquished people. On the contrary, they live on the footing of the most real and complete equality. Marriages are constantly being contracted between them and the Americans; finally the country is enjoying an immense prosperity, a prosperity that increases daily. . .»

Again Tocqueville mentioned a remark that he had heard. «I am told that religion has little hold over souls here?» He could hardly have chosen a topic more in the line of the consul's special knowledge, for only a month or so before Guillemain had drawn up for his home government a long report on church affairs.[14]

«Religion hasn't much hold,» he answered, «but I think that results partly from the bad priests sent us from Europe. We are inundated by Italians who have nothing in common with the population and whose morals are detestable. However, there is no political animosity of any kind against the ministers of the Catholic church, who on their part never concern themselves with [other] affairs. .»

On another occasion the acute M. Guillemain had remarked that he had «never been able to understand how one could draw general deductions from American institutions, the position of America is so special.» But now, in the matter of Church and State, he seemed to think an exception might be made.

«. . . From what I see here and in the other American states,» he said with emphasis, «I am profoundly convinced that in the interests of Religion one should make an absolute separation between the clergy and the state, and abandon Religion to the influence that it can generate for itself . . .»

Once again M. Guillemain was announcing an opinion of which Tocqueville had already been persuaded.[15] The young investigator passed on, therefore, to an institution that had considerably exercised his indignation at the quadroon ball.

«They say that morals, particularly in the colored population, are very bad?» he ventured.

«There exists, as a matter of fact, a great deal of immorality among the colored people. But how could it be otherwise?» said M. Guillemain. «The law destines, as it were, colored women to debauchery. You've no doubt noticed, in the places reserved for mulattoes in the theatre and elsewhere, women as white as the most beautiful Europeans. *Eh bien!* For all that they belong to the proscribed race, because tradition makes it known that there is African blood in their veins. Yet these women, and many others who, without being as white, possess yet almost the tint and the graces of Europeans and have often received an excellent education, are forbidden by law to marry into the ruling and rich race of whites. If they wish to contract a legitimate union, they have to marry with the men of their caste, and partake their humiliation. For the men of color don't even enjoy the shameful privilege accorded their women. Even did neither their color or education betray them, and that's often the case, they would not be the less condemned to perpetual indignities. Not a [illegible] white but has the right to maltreat the unhappy person in his way and to thrust him into the muck crying: 'Get out of the way, mulatto!' At the head of legal documents the law makes him write: *homme de couleur*. Free, they can hope for nothing. Yet among them I know men of virtue and of means. It's in isolating itself thus obstinately from all the rest that the aristocracy of the whites (like all aristocracies in general) exposes itself to danger on the American continent and to almost certain destruction in the Antilles. If, without giving the negro rights, it had at least taken in those of the colored men whose birth and education most nearly approximated its own, the latter would infallibly have been attached to its cause, for they are in reality much closer to the whites than to the blacks. Only brute force would have remained for the negroes. By repelling the mulattoes, however, the white aristocracy gives the slaves, on the contrary, the only weapon they need to become free: intelligence and leadership.»

The whole problem fascinated and repelled the French visitors. What to do with the negro? They could see no satisfactory solution. Yet with some justice they now felt that they were at least fairly well acquainted with the subject and could talk with an air of authority about its inescapable features.

«When you meet people who tell you that climate has no influence on the character of peoples,» Tocqueville was soon writing to Chabrol,[16] «assure them that they are mistaken. We have seen the French of Canada: they are a tranquil, moral,religious people. We are leaving in Louisiana other Frenchmen: restless, dissolute, lax in all things. Between them are fifteen degrees of latitude, which are truly the best reason that can be given for the difference.

«What morals, my dear friend, are those of a region of the South into which slavery has been brought! The tableau confounds the imagination.»

On the second of January Tocqueville and Beaumont had a conversation with a lawyer (whose name they soon forgot). It revolved about the subject of the jury in civil cases. Their informant described the efforts that had been made by the Americans to introduce the system into Louisiana law, and the conflicts with French law that had resulted. Not yet had [trial by] jury entered into popular usage, apparently. People disliked being jurors. Lawsuits were held up, as a consequence. Cases were badly judged. In short, the jury system was not a great success in Louisiana. At least so they were told.[17]

But Tocqueville was not to be argued so lightly out of what had come to be one of his firmest political convictions. After a day's reflection he had the following comment to make in his diary:

«When an entire population proclaims an institution good; when all parties recognize its usefulness, and that not in one time or place but over a long series of centuries and in all parts of the world whither the fragments of this people go, and whatever the political laws they adopt; [when that happens] it is hard to admit that this institution can be vicious. That's what has happened in regard to the use of the jury for civil trials.»

Here, definitely, was a case where Tocqueville was ready to label his informant (and the majority of Louisianians) mistaken. But with the opinion of another lawyer, «a very celebrated lawyer of New Orleans,» whom they had seen their first afternoon and whose name Tocqueville had likewise forgotten, they were thoroughly prepared to agree.

The eminent attorney had been elaborating M. Guillemain's remarks about the legislature. «When the legislature is in session, it can be said that the whole body of legislation is jeopardized,» he had affirmed.[18] «Our houses are composed in large part of young lawyers, ignorant and fond of intrigue. (Everyone here thinks he can be a member of the legislature.) They make, unmake, slice and cut up at random. Here's an instance: Since the cession to Spain, many points in our civil law have been regulated according to Spanish law. At the end of 1828, at the end of the session, a bill was passed unperceived which abrogated all the [these?] laws, in a body, without putting anything in their place. The next day, on waking up, the bar and bench learned with stupefaction the performance of the day before. But the deed had been done.

«Q. But why don't noteworthy men reach the legislature?»

«A. I doubt whether the people would name them. Besides, little store is set by public office and the outstanding men don't solicit it. (This is at the same time what makes the state operate so badly and what prevents revolutions.)»

And Tocqueville had been reminded of «another example of the same kind given by the consul. Three years ago the legislature, the last day of the session, passed, in such a way that it was not noticed and in an act having nothing to do with this object, a law decreeing that henceforth the tenth part of the goods belonging to foreigners dying in Louisiana should belong to the State. It was nothing less than the right of escheat. I made representations, said the consul; many of the members seemed to me themselves surprised at what they had done. The act was repealed the following session.»

Apparently it would be possible to go on with such instances *ad infinitum*. There was, fairness forced the young Frenchman to note, one counterbalancing bit of evidence: «The present governor of Louisiana is a man of talent and character. The two senators from Louisiana, Mr. Johnson and Edward Livingston, are two of the leading men of the Union. Yet they are elected.»[19]

The rule was not invariable, then. Yet clearly some tentative conclusions might already be stated. Tocqueville's first decision was interesting.

«Effect of elections, direct and indirect, in America,» he jotted in his diary the last day:[20] [the latter] good; [the former] bad. . .» In other words, Senators who were chosen by legislatures might prove able men. But the legislators themselves, being chosen directly by the people, were likely to be worse than mediocre.

Tocqueville's second decision was this: «The bad choices in small republics result in part from the fact that distinguished men do not solicit the honors or enter politics. This inconvenience appears to me more than compensated by the absence of a great irritant or of revolutions born of ambition for power.» In two sentences, suddenly, he had summed up the lessons of a whole month: from the teachings of Timothy Walker of Cincinnati to the opinion of the celebrated lawyer of New Orleans. And now he came to his third conclusion, which turned out to be merely a rephrasing of something Consul Guillemain had said. As Tocqueville put it:

«The Greatest merit of American government is to be *powerless* and *passive*. In the present state of things America needs, in order to prosper, neither skillful leadership nor profound plans, nor great efforts, but liberty and still more liberty. What a point of comparison between such a state of affairs and our own!»

Notes

1. Extraordinary though it may seem, Beaumont was but 29 and Alexis de Tocqueville, the philosopher of democracy, but 26!

2. Translation of «24 Heures» and «Suite» by the late Paul Lambert White, who discovered the documents.

3. Marginal note: «Monsieur a sans doute habité longtemps chez nos voisins? il me t . . . et répondit: huit jours.» Tocqueville's diary records of his interviews with interesting acquaintances in America were not exact reproductions of the conversations, as he was often unable to make any note of them on paper until evening, or many hours after. Yet so accurate and faithful was his memory that not only was he able to preserve the sense of what was said, but often also the very words in which a given opinion was expressed.

4. Marginal note: «qui distinguent tous les hommes d'une grande capacité et tous les diplomats.» Tocqueville must have been thinking of some of his acquaintances in high politics at home, possibly even of his lordly cousin Chateaubriand, though the allusion is not clear.

5. Cahier portatif III, no. 26.

6. *Du Système Pénitentiaire aux Etats-Unis* (1835), p. 27.

7. In his reports to his home government (Ministère des Affaires Etrangères), the consul signed himself: «Guillemain.» After being briefly identified with the consular service at Savannah and Baltimore, M. Guillemain had come to New Orleans, Sept. 23, 1816, on *ad interim* appointment.

8. Cahier non-alphabétique III, no. 13, under date of 1 January 1832, records their conversation as follows: «M. Guillemain is certainly a man of *esprit* and, I believe, of means. The whole by exception, for incapacity seems to be the common right among French agents abroad. He has been living in New Orleans for the last fifteen or seventeen years.

   «This country, he said to us, is still essentially French, in ideas, morals, opinions, customs and fashions. France is openly taken for a model. I have often been struck by the echo that our political passions found here and by the analogy that still exists in this regard between the populations of Louisiana and of France. It has often happened to me to predict from the impression that an event made here what it would produce in France, and I have always guessed right . . .»

9. More probably: «21» (as in Cahier portatif IV, p. 15).

10. Etienne Mazureau (1777-1849) had come from France to America on the seizure of power by Napoleon. After some fifteen months in New York and New Jersey, he had finally, in March 1804, made his way to New Orleans. Established there in law, his knowledge of French and Spanish had proven invaluable, he had become the partner of Edward Livingston, and was now known for his encyclopedic learning, and a legal income equalled only by his generosity and extravagance. Of a short and stout physique, his head appeared much too large for his body.

11. Cahier non-alphabétique III, no. 12: «1 January 1832, Conversation with Mr. Mazureau, one of the foremost lawyers of Louisiana.»

12. Cahier portatif III, no. 26.

13. Cahier non-alphabétique III, no. 13.

14. In the Ministère des Affaires Etrangères there still exists a long report on the state of the Catholic church in Louisiana, signed by Guillemain, and dated: 3 Sept. 1831.

15. On landing in America the one subject on which Tocqueville and Beaumont had found New Yorkers and New Englanders unanimously agreed (whether they were great men or obscure, Protestants or Catholics) was the wisdom and the absolute necessity of separating Church from State. The result had been a swift conversion of the two young students.

16. Letter dated «Chesapeak Bay, 16 janvier 1832.»

17. Cahier portatif III, no. 28.

18. Cahier non-alphabétique III, no. 14.

19. André Bienvenu Roman (1795-1866), Governor 1831-1835 and 1839-1849, is remembered as one of Louisiana's ablest executives. Senator Josiah Stoddard Johnston (1784-1833), of distinguished Connecticut family, served in the Senate from 1823 until his death ten years later. In 1831 he had been re-elected by a legislature opposed to him in political opinion. As to the abilities of Edward Livingston, who had resigned his Senate seat to become Jackson's Secretary of State the preceding November, no testimony is necessary. His successor, George Augustus Waggamann (1782-1843), seems to have been less distinguished.

20. Cahier portatif III, no. 28, 4 January.

A LOUISIANA SUGAR PLANTATION

By Charles Gayarré

The Boré plantation was situated on the left bank of the Mississippi, about six miles above New Orleans, taking as a point of departure the Cathedral, then the centre of the city, and following the public road that ran along the river in all its windings. The next one above was the plantation of Pierre Foucher, the son-in-law of Boré, and a portion of it is now the City Park, on which the «World's Exposition» lately took place, succeeded by the present «American Exposition.» It is a spot round which cluster more historical souvenirs than about any other in Louisiana. The plantation above Foucher's, and on which has since sprung up the town of Carrollton, belonged to Lafrénière, Attorney-General under the French government, who was the principal leader in the revolution that drove away, in 1768, the first Spanish Governor, Don Antonio de Ulloa, who had come to take possession of Louisiana, transferred by France to Spain. Lafrénière had two sons-in-law – Noyan, Bienville's nephew, executed by Governor O'Reilly for rebellion against the King of Spain, and Lebreton, who had been a *mousquetaire*, or guardsman, in the King's household troops. He became proprietor of the plantation after his father-in-law had been shot by the same authority. The son of this Lebreton married a daughter of Boré. On his being assassinated by a petted and pampered slave, the plantation passed into the hands of Macarty, who had been the tutor of the children of the defunct, and has since become the town of Carrollton. The youngest and last daughter of Boré married Don Carlos Gayarré, the grandson of the *real contador*, or royal contador, Don Estevan Gayarré, whose mission was to take possession of Louisiana with Governor Ulloa. This third son-in-law resided on the plantation of Boré; so that all those families were grouped in a tribe-like fashion around a central point – the head and patriarch of the family and its branches.

Indigo had been the principal staple of the colony, but at last a worm which attacked the plant and destroyed it, through consecutive years, was reducing to poverty and to the utmost despair the whole population. Jean Etienne de Boré determined to make a bold experiment to save himself and his fellow-citizens, and convert his indigo plantation into one of sugar-cane.

In these critical circumstances he resolved to renew the attempt which had been made to manufacture sugar. He immediately prepared to go into all the expenses and incur all the obligations consequent on so costly an undertaking. His wife warned him that her father had in former years vainly made a similar attempt; she represented that he was hazarding on the cast of a die all that remained of their means of existence; that if he failed, as was so probable, he would reduce his family to hopeless poverty; that he was of an age – being over fifty years old – when fate was not to be tempted by doubtful experiments, as he could not reasonably entertain the hope of a sufficiently long life to rebuild his fortune if once completely shattered; and that he would not only expose himself to ruin, but also to a risk much more to be dreaded – that of falling into the grasp of creditors. Friends and relatives joined their remonstrances to hers, but could not shake the strong resolve of his energetic mind. He had fully matured his plan, and was determined to sink or swim with it.

Purchasing a quantity of canes from two individuals named Mendez and Solis, who cultivated them only for sale as a dainty in the New Orleans market, and to make coarse syrup, he began to plant in 1794, and to make all the other necessary preparation, and in 1795 he made a crop of sugar which sold for twelve thousand dollars – a large sum at that time. Boré's attempt had excited the keenest interest; many had frequently visited him during the year to witness his preparations; gloomy predictions had been set afloat, and on the day when the grinding of the cane was to begin, a large number of the most respectable inhabitants had gathered in and about the sugarhouse to be present at the failure or success of the experiment. Would the syrup granulate? would it be converted into sugar? The crowd waited with eager impatience for the moment when the man who watches the coction of the juice of the cane determines whether it is ready to granulate. When that moment arrived the stillness of death came among them, each one holding his breath, and feeling that it was a matter of ruin or prosperity for them all. Suddenly the sugar-maker cried out with exultation, «It granulates!» Inside and outside of the building one could have heard the wonderful tidings flying from mouth to mouth and dying in the distance, as if a hundred glad echoes were telling it to one another. Each one of the by-standers pressed forward to ascertain the fact on the evidence of his own senses, and when it could no longer be doubted, there came a shout of joy, and all flocked around Etienne de Boré, overwhelming him with congratulations, and almost hugging the man whom they called their savior – the savior of Louisiana. Ninety years have elapsed since, and an event which produced so much excitement at the time is very nearly obliterated from the memory of the present generation.

In 1796 a stirring event occurred at the plantation of Etienne de Boré. The French General Collot, on his way to New Orleans from the Western States and Territories, had stopped to visit that gentleman. As soon as this was known in the city, the Governor, Baron de Carondelet, who had received from Philadelphia a confidential communication informing him that General Collot was intrusted by the French government with a secret mission, against which the Spanish authorities were to be on their guard, sent up an armed boat by the river and fifty dragoons by land to arrest him. The General was put in the boat and taken down to New Orleans, where he was imprisoned in Fort St. Charles, situated about the spot where now stands the United States Mint. On the next day he was called upon by the Spanish Governor, who proposed to him a house in town which he might occupy on parole, and with a soldier at his door. Having accepted the proposition, he left the fort in the Governor's carriage. Shortly after, on the 1st of November, the General, from whom some of his maps, drawings, and writings had been taken away, was conveyed on board of one of the King's galleys, and accompanied by a captain of the regiment of Louisiana, who was not to lose sight of him, was transported to the Balize, where he was detained a prisoner in the house of the chief pilot, Juan Ronquillo, «situated,» he said, «in the midst of a vast swamp, and from which there was no egress except in a boat.» He remained at that dismal spot until the 22d of December, when he embarked on board of the brig *Iphigenia* for Philadelphia.

Etienne de Boré was extremely indignant at the arbitrary arrest of General Collot, who was his guest at the time. He considered it an insult to himself, and he expressed his feelings loudly and without restraint. He was known for his intense attachment to French interests, and it is said that the Baron seriously thought of having him arrested and transported to Havana, but that he was deterred by the fear of producing a commotion by inflicting so harsh a treatment on so distinguished a citizen, who, by his personal character, his rank, his family connections, and the benefit he had lately conferred on his country by the introduction of a new branch of industry, commanded universal sympathies and exercised the widest influence.

In the beginning of 1798, when Gayoso de Lemos was Governor of Louisiana, the Boré plantation was visited by three illustrious strangers, the Duke of Orleans and his two brothers, the Count of Beaujolais and the Duke of Montpensier, of the royal house of France, who, driven into exile after the death of their father on the scaffold, were striking examples of those remarkable vicissitudes of fortune with which the annals of history are so replete. When a *mousquetaire*, or guardsman, in the household troops of Louis XV., and watching over the safety of the Majesty of France, little did de Boré dream that the day would come when three princes of the blood would be his guests on the bank of the Mississippi.

This plantation was sagaciously and tastefully laid out for beauty and productiveness. The gardens occupied a large area, and at once astonished the eye by the magnificence of their shady avenues of orange-trees. Unbroken retreats of myrtle and laurel defied the rays of the sun. Flowers of every description perfumed the air. Extensive orchards produced every fruit of which the climate was susceptible. By judicious culture there had been obtained remarkable success in producing an abundance of juicy grapes, every bunch of which, however, when they began to ripen, was enveloped in a sack of wire to protect them against the depredations of birds. The fields were cultivated with such a careful observance of the variable exigencies of every successive season that there was no such thing known as a short or half crop, or no crop at all. This was reserved for much later days. But under the administration of Etienne de Boré, during a period of about twenty-five years, from the first ebullition of a sugar kettle in 1795 to the time of his death in 1820, every crop was regularly the same within a few hogsheads. When, however, he ceased to exist, this seat of order and prosperity became a chaos of disorder and ruin, and the estate finally passed away from the family into the hands of strangers.

It was a self-sufficient little domain, exporting a good deal, and importing but meagrely, so that the balance was very much in its favor. It was largely supplied with sheep and their wool, with geese, ducks, turkeys, guinea-fowls, and every variety of poultry without stint. Eggs were gathered by the bushel. Pigeons clouded the sun, and when the small black cherries (called *merises* in French) were ripe, those feathered epicures ate them voraciously, got royally drunk, and falling from the trees, strewed the ground beneath. A numerous herd of cattle, under the inspection of old Pompey and a black youngster called *Souris* (in English *mouse*), on account of his diminutive figure, pastured luxuriously and grew fat. What a quantity of fresh butter, rich cheese, milk, cream, and clabber! Vast barns gorged with corn, rice, and hay; hives bursting with honey; vegetables without measure, and so luscious; a varied and liberal supply of carriages always ready for use, and horses for the saddle or for driving, all glossy and sleek; spirited mules, well fed and well curried – the pride of the field hands; shrimps and fish from the river; multitudes of crawfish from the deep ditches; raccoons and opossums to gladden the heart of the most surly negro. Boré had made of his estate both a farm and plantation. Every day before dawn cart-loads departed for New Orleans with diversified produce, most of which was handed over, when it reached its destination, to two old women, Agathe and Marie, who were the occupants and guardians of the town house of Boré. They admirably understood the art of selling, and were well known to the whole population, whose confidence they possessed. Going to market with baskets full, they generally brought them back empty. Josephine, a handsome, strong-limbed, and light-footed mulattress, with another female assistant of a darker color, sold the milk and butter with wonderful rapidity, and both were back at the plantation at half past 10 A. M., with the mail, the daily papers, and whatever else they had to bring. It was clockwork in everything on that plantation of the old *régime*. Hence the *farm* produced at least six thousand dollars per annum, besides supplying all the wants of those who resided on it, black or white, and the product of the *plantation* was almost all profit.

The discipline established on it [the plantation] was a sort of military one. At dawn, when it was time to go to the field and to the other labors of the day, the big bell rang. The whole gang of negroes came to the house, in front of which they all kneeled, and a short prayer was said, always in the presence of a male member of the family, who stood up with head uncovered. The same ceremony was performed in the evening before they went to their supper and their rest for the night. I vividly remember how I felt when, being about eight years old, I was for the first time called upon to preside over the prayers of the dark assemblage.

Those who administered the plantation under M. de Boré's vigilant eye were his two grandsons, Jean Baptiste and Deschapelles Lebreton, and two Frenchmen as overseers. Each one of those gentlemen had his post of duty assigned to him, and his particular department of supervision, for which he was responsible. Every evening those subordinates came to the «lord and master of all that he surveyed,» and rendered him an account of their stewardship. Then they received his orders for the next day.

I do not remember having seen a negro whipped, but I remember having been present when occasionally one of them, for some delinquency, was put in the stocks for the night or during a whole Sunday. This is the principal punishment that I have known to be inflicted. Basile, the commander of the gang, and the most boastful, the most self-important negro who ever trod the earth, although he was invested with but very limited power, was armed with an enormous whip, at least twenty feet in length, which from time to time he cracked portentously over his head with the most terrific emphasis of sound, whilst goading with threatening words some laggard who he thought did not wield his hoe with sufficient diligence; but I never saw that whip fall on the back of any of the hands. In the field when at work they used to sing in chorus or concert, and there was in those songs a melody which lingers to this day in my heart. I now wish that I had noted down the words and the music which seemed to enliven so much those sons of Africa, and which certainly were their own composition.

This landlord of the old *régime* never raised hogs. I never saw one ranging and grunting at liberty on any portion of his domains. Hog-raising was a monopoly which he left to his negroes. Leading to the sugar-house and its dependencies there was a long and fine avenue of pecan-trees. In a parallel line to it there were the negro quarters, comfortable cabins with fireplaces, and drawn in a double row. Each negro had a hog-pen behind his cabin, and his small poultry-yard; each one had also a lot of ground for raising corn, pumpkins, and anything else he pleased. When fat, the hogs were sold at the market price to master or mistress, or to any other bidder, when not slaughtered by their owners for their own alimentation.

The Mississippi in those days, when high, used to carry an immense quantity of driftwood. On Sundays many of the negroes would draw ashore with ease a quantity of logs, which they cut into cords, and sold to their master for a dollar per cord. If at any time they were forced, for the good of the crop, to do more than their usual task, they were liberally paid for it, or the number of extra hours during which they worked was returned to them out of their ordinary days of labor. They caught catfish, sheep's-head, shrimps, eels in abundance, raccoons, opossums, etc., and in my boyhood, when rambling about their quarters at the time they cooked their meals, my nostrils were frequently regaled with a savory smell. It is certain that they all looked fat and sleek, and none ran away. Therefore they must have been gently treated and well fed. There were among them masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, cartwrights, every other mechanic that might be wanted, and even an excellent shoemaker. So we were perfectly independent of the outward world.

But the negroes did not wear shoes at that antediluvian epoch. They protected their feet with what they called *quantiers*, made in this way: The negro would plant his foot on an ox-hide that had undergone a certain preparatory process to soften it. Armed with a flat and keen blade, another negro would cut the hide according to the size and shape of the foot, leaving enough margin to overlap the top of it up to the ankle. Holes were bored into it, and with strips of the same leather this rustic shoe was laced tight to the foot. It was rough and unsightly, but wholesome, like the French *sabot*, or wooden shoe. The foot in a woollen sock, or even bare, when encased in a *quantier* stuffed with rags or hay, was kept remarkably warm and dry. Twice a year there came numerous bales of merchandise – blankets and warm clothing at the beginning of winter, and lighter articles of dress at the beginning of spring. The thick *capot de couverte* was universally used by the negroes, and frequently even by their masters. It was a sort of frock with a hood, and made out of a blanket.

This population of black laborers was for a long time composed only of natives of Louisiana called creole negroes, and of natives of Africa called Banbaras, or by whatever other names that designated the tribes they had belonged to in their country. There were distinct peculiarities and idiosyncrasies among them. On the Boré plantation there was one who pretended that he was a prince, and had ruled over numerous subjects. He was so proud and fiery that he was named Achilles. He looked upon the other negroes as his inferiors, and exacted from them all great demonstrations of respect. When the American negroes, as they were called, began to be introduced – meaning those who came from the United States, to which Louisiana was not yet annexed – they were treated with the utmost contempt, and even deep-rooted aversion, by the creole and African negroes with whom they had to associate. They were looked upon as thieves, and capable of every sort of villainous tricks. Whenever any theft was perpetrated or any other delinquency committed, it was immediately alleged that it was the *Méricain coquin* (the American rogue) who had done it. So they had at first a hard time of it. On the other hand, the *Méricain coquin*, being generally more intelligent than the creole and the imported African, was disposed to treat them as fools, and openly asserted his own superiority. Thus those black immigrants, when they first came to a Louisiana plantation, rather put things out of joint, from a want of affinity with the sable company into which they were introduced.

On a certain occasion one of those Africans, named Big Congo, a field hand, was the hero of an amusing anecdote. The overseer had sent him to M. de Boré with a message to which an answer was desired. The barbarian returned after a while and informed the overseer that he had found *master* in the parlor, that he had delivered the message, that the *old man* had looked at him straight in the face, but had not answered anything.

«Brute! what story is this?» exclaimed the overseer, getting angry.

«It is true,» insisted the negro, in his peculiar lingo, which I translate into English. «Master was in a gold window. He looked at me good, but would not talk.»

«What! what! are you drunk?» said the overseer, who was fast losing his temper.

But the negro stuck to it. «Pray come with me,» he said, imploringly. «Don't get angry. I will show you master in the gold window.»

The overseer went with him, and entering the saloon, found hung up to the wall an oil portrait of Boré in a gilt frame that had just been brought home from the city. The African pointed to it with intense satisfaction in proof of his having told the truth. «*A la li*,» he said; «here he is.»

It was a living likeness and a fine specimen of art, executed by a most skilful painter named Mouchette, who was on his travels, and merely passing through Louisiana. Big Congo was comically bewildered when assured that no flesh and blood stood before him.

I have already intimated that the former *mousquetaire*, or member of the royal body-guard, and ex-captain of cavalry in the French army, kept up a complete military discipline on his plantation. It is true to the very letter. Every evening after supper sentinels were stationed at every point where depredations might be committed. They were two by two, armed with stout clubs – never a sentinel alone. At midnight they were relieved and replaced by others, and so on in turn, going through the whole gang successively, a new set every night. Thus every trespass, every violation of law or order, was well guarded against.

One day, however, the habitually quiet denizens of the Boré plantation were thrown into commotion. Boré had bought a magnificent pair of carriage-horses. They had not been one week at home when they disappeared at night. The stables were found locked. All the gates of the yard in which stood the stables looked as if their padlocks and bars had not been tampered with. There was not the slightest sign of *effraction* anywhere. The walls could not have been overleaped. The sentinels had seen and heard nothing, and their fidelity was not doubted. The whole affair was extremely mysterious and puzzling. One thing, however, was certain. The thief, who evidently was a most expert one, had only the choice between two roads in his flight – down to the city or up along the bank of the river. On close inspection, tracks were discovered on the way up, and the pursuit began. But the thief had the advantage of several hours in his favor. The stolen horses were fleet, and the thief managed to keep ahead in the race. He had been seen by many, but not suspected. The pursuit ceased at Baton Rouge without success. Unfortunately there were no telegraphs in those days. Our bewildered negroes, unable to account for this bold and extraordinary deed, which appeared marvelous to their superstitious imagination, attributed it to Zombi or Bouki, who rank among the mischievous spirits in which they believe.

Among the sensational occurrences which I remember whilst a boy, and enjoying the sweet spring life of youth on the Boré plantation, was the shock of an earthquake, which was distinctly felt in lower Louisiana – the same which so terrified New Madrid, further up on the Mississippi. Next came the tremendous hurricane which did so much damage below the city, in the parish of Plaquemines, by causing the river to overflow, and by precipitating the waters of the Gulf upon the low lands, whereby many families were drowned. This hurricane was a fine specimen of the kind, and raged on our plantation with fearful sublimity. It began early in the morning. A dense pell-mell mass of white and dark clouds, strangely mixed, under the whip and spur of a furious wind, was driven in a helter-skelter race so close to the earth that a tall man might have fancied that he could touch it with his hand. I remember to have repeatedly and gleefully jumped up as if to accomplish it myself, although a little boy, and whenever the irresistible grasp of the hurricane, lifting me above the ground, carried me onward ten or twelve feet, and tumbled me down heels over head on the greensward, I shrieked with delight. There was not a drop of rain; it was all blow. When night came, the battering blows of the giant became more terrific. The house shook to its very foundations, and in every point of its structure. It seemed to be assailed by an infuriated multitude of winds that rushed from every quarter of the horizon to engage in a demoniacal conflict on our premises. Notwithstanding this war of the elements, I had fallen asleep, when my father waked me up suddenly, and apparently in great alarm carried me in his arms to what was probably thought a safer portion of the building.

My family was at the Boré plantation when, in the afternoon of the 23d of December, 1814, General Jackson was informed that the British had landed in Louisiana, and that a portion of their troops had been seen on the Villeré plantation below the city. I was then at the College of Orleans, corner of St. Claude and Bayou Road, *alias* Hospital Street, when, at 3 o'clock P. M., a great commotion was observed within its learned precincts. All studies were suspended; the class-rooms shut up; the pupils hurrying to and fro in evident alarm; parents pouring in and taking their children away. My cousin, Frédéric Foucher, the son of Pierre Foucher, and myself were beginning to fear our being forgotten and left to shift for ourselves, instead of being as well cared for as most of our companions – both our families being six miles above the city, and ignorant of the exciting news – when there came a messenger from Madame Porée, the sister of Pierre Foucher, and the aunt of Frédéric, to tender us the shelter of her house at the corner of Dumaine and Royal streets, which is still in existence, with the same antiquated front painted yellow, and with the same balcony on which the two boys stood and saw Major Plauché's battalion of uniformed, well-equipped, and well-drilled militia pass under it. That corps was composed of the *élite* of the young men of the city – *la jeunesse dorée* – and it seems to me that I see now as vividly as I saw then the the handsome Edmond Foucher conspicuous in the ranks of those who were thus marching rapidly to meet the enemy. Looking up to the balcony, he saluted his old aunt with a cheerful smile and a wave of the hand that seemed intended to comfort her and dispel her alarms.

At seven o'clock the battle began, and the roar of the artillery, with the discharges of musketry, was almost as distinctly heard as if in our immediate neighborhood. There was not the slightest noise in the apparently dead city. It held its breath in awful suspense. There was not a human being to be seen moving in the streets. We, the two boys and the ladies of the household, petrified into absolute silence by the apprehensions of the moment, stood on the balcony until half past nine, when the firing gradually ceased. But still we continued to remain on the same spot; for what was to happen? Were our defenders retreating, pursued by the enemy? These were hours of anxiety never to be forgotten. About eleven o'clock the oppressive silence in the city was broken by the furiously rapid gallop of a horseman shouting as loud as he could, «Victory! victory!» He turned from Chartres Street into Dumaine, and from Dumaine into Royal, still shouting «Victory!» The voice had become hoarse, and yet no human voice that I ever afterward heard was fraught with more sweet music. That night we went to bed with thankful hearts. The two boys soon slept soundly, as boys sleep, with that blissful unconcern which appertains to their age. But I doubt if our kind hostess and her daughters closed their eyes, for they had husbands, brothers, sons, on the battlefield, and they did not know at what cost to them the victory had been achieved.

Early the next morning the two boys departed to meet their respective families, one on the Foucher plantation and the other on the adjacent plantation of Boré. The 9th of January was to be the tenth anniversary of my coming into this world. In the morning of the preceding day the famous battle of the 8th was fought on the plains of Chalmette, four miles below the city. In a bee-line the distance must have been very short between the field of action and the Boré plantation, six miles above New Orleans by the windings of the river, for the furious cannonading and the discharges of musketry were prodigiously distinct. The ladies of the family, pale with the natural emotions of fear produced by the dangers of the situation, were grouped on the broad gallery in front of the house. No man was visible, for the only one who had remained at home (on account of his age) had, when the battle began, ascended with slow but firm steps a flight of stairs which led to the top of the portico. At every volley of artillery or musketry I flung myself on the floor, exclaiming, «Ten Englishmen killed!» «Twenty Englishmen flat on the ground!» and so on. I continued rejoicing in the fancied destruction of our invaders, notwithstanding the remonstrances of my poor mother, in whose alarm I very little participated. The battle had not yet ended when my grandfather Boré came down from his post of observation with the same measured step and the same self-possession with which he had ascended, and said to his daughters, who anxiously interrogated his looks, «Dismiss your fears; the Americans are victorious.»

«But, father, how do you know it?» inquired my mother.

«You forget, my dear child,» replied M. de Boré, with a calm smile, «that I have some military experience. My practised ear has not been deceived, I am sure. The American guns have silenced the English guns. The enemy is defeated.»

These words had hardly been spoken when, in the long avenue of pecan-trees that led to the river, there appeared a troop of about a hundred men rushing toward the house. «The English! here come the English!» was the simultaneous cry of the women. M. de Boré stretched himself up to his full height, shaded his eyes with his hand, and after having looked steadily at the advancing crowd, said, contemptuously, «These men the English! bah!»

They came rapidly to the piazza, about six feet high, on which we stood, and along which ran a wooden balustrade. M. de Boré did not understand one word of the language spoken by these unexpected visitors, whose ragamuffin appearance was no recommendation. But if they were bandits, it was comfortable to see that they all were unarmed.

«Who are they, and what do they want?» Inquired M. de Boré, surveying them evidently with no friendly eye. He was informed by one of his family that they were fugitives who reported that the Americans had been completely routed, that they themselves were a portion of the defeated, and that they begged for food. The blood ran to the cheeks of the old soldier, his eyes flashed, and he shouted in French to the men: «You lie! the Americans are victorious. You have run away; you are cowards. Never shall it be said that I gave a hospitable welcome to dastardly fugitives from the battle-field. Hence, all of you, or I will call my negroes to drive you away.» His words were not comprehended, but his indignant wrath was visible, and his pantomime was expressive. One of the beggarly crew seemed to apprehend his meaning, for he took off his hat and pointed with his index finger to a hole which looked as if made by a ball. He no doubt intended to intimate that he had faced danger, and that he was not as cowardly as supposed. In making this exhibition he had approached close to the piazza and held his hat aloft. The old gentleman retreated a few steps; then rushing back to the balustrade of the piazza, on which he leaned forward, and looking down upon the suppliant below, shouted: «In thy hat! in thy hat!» – striking his breast violently – «*there* is where the ball should have been received, and not through thy hat, when probably thy back was turned to the enemy. No! no food for cowards. There is food in the British camp; go and get it.»

He was superb at that moment, and turning his back upon the pitiful-looking postulants, he kept up pacing the piazza like a chafed lion in a cage. My mother followed him a few feet behind, as he walked to and fro with a hurried step, and thus expostulated all the while:

«Father, they look so miserable.»

«No! no food for cowards. I have said it.»

«They seem to be so jaded and hungry.»

«No! I say no!»

«Father, they are so wet, and shivering with cold.»

«No! no food for fugitives from the field of honor.»

«But, father,» continued my mother, in a piteous tone, «they may not have fled, after all. Perhaps they only retreated.»

Grandfather, wheeling round, with a smile on his lips, and with the usual expression of benevolence on his face, said: «Daughter, I am inflexible. No food shall *I* give to those wretches. But I am going away, and in my absence *you* may deal as you please with those heroes of retreat» (*avec ces héros de la retraite*). True to his word, he disappeared, and was not seen for the remainder of the day.

Meanwhile the little boy, who has grown up to be the octogenarian who writes these lines, had a grand time of it, for big fires were lighted over the vast court-yard, calves and sheep were killed and roasted, huge pots of hominy and of rice were prepared; and he keenly enjoyed the *barbecue*, if he may be permitted to use this well-known modern expression, that was given to those men, who were a detachment of the Kentuckians that had fled from Colonel Thornton's attack upon General Morgan's command on the right bank of the river, as related in history.

When the war was over, the Tennesseeans, before they were permitted to go home, encamped for some time on the plantation adjacent to the lower line of the Boré plantation. That plantation then belonged, or had belonged, to the Ducros family, and subsequently became the property of Captain Beale, who at the head of the Orleans Riflemen had distinguished himself under General Jackson in the defence of our city. Beale had married a daughter of the Spanish Governor, Don Carlos de Grandpré.

Generals Coffee and Carroll, who commanded the division of the Tennessee troops, together with their military suite, were tendered by M. de Boré the hospitality of his house, where they were luxuriously entertained for several months. General Jackson was a frequent visitor, and the writer of these lines, although more than once kindly patted on the head by the hero, remembers that he stood much in awe of the warrior who was reported to have killed so many men. I remember even to have been considerably excited on one occasion, when he, jestingly no doubt, proposed to my mother to take me with him to Tennessee. On that day I felt strongly inclined to begin hostilities against the hero.

As a social incident, I may be at liberty to mention that at dinner, the dessert being over and coffee served, M. de Boré would rise and retire with the ladies, after having with a bow taken leave of his military guests, whom he left to the enjoyment of their bottles of wine placed on the «bare mahogany,» after the American fashion. The same formality was observed every day. This convivial privilege seemed to be relished by those officers, who frequently would linger an hour round the board, conversing freely together in a language entirely unknown to the family of whose hospitality they partook. They were courteous and tolerably well-bred, gentlemanly in many respects, but some of them had peculiar habits, among which the most eccentric was for one of them to throw himself back in his chair and elevate his feet to the level of the table, on which these extremities of the human body were made to repose in apparent comfort. If anybody happened to indulge in a sneering remark on the subject, M. de Boré would deprecatingly say, with a gentle smile: *«Eh bien! Que voulez-vous? Ils n'en savent pas davantage. C'est la coutume de leur pays.»* As to General Jackson, he was conspicuous for his courtly manners. It was due to instinct or inspiration. He was nature's nobleman.

Breakfast was at eight in the morning, dinner at two P. M., and supper at seven in the evening. It was seldom that there was not some guest or guests at every one of those meals, either from the immediate neighborhood or from distant parts. In those days travelling between New Orleans and Baton Rouge, now the capital of the State, and both situated on the left bank of the Mississippi, was generally on horseback, or in a land vehicle of some sort; rarely by water. Some of the planters who lived at a distance of thirty or forty miles from New Orleans drove to it with four in hand, and it was not merely for show, considering that the road was occasionally in a very poor condition. All of them knew very well that they would offend if they passed by the Boré plantation without stopping to rest for the night, or at least to take refreshments. Peddlers going up or down what was then called the «Coast,» carrying their wares on their backs or in carts, and in boats pulled up against the current *à la cordelle* – that is to say, by a rope thrown over the shoulders of men who footed it on the levee – frequently halted at Boré's gates with full reliance on the hospitality of the old *mousquetaire*. They always found a comfortable room at their service, and were kindly admitted to the family table. They belonged by virtue of their white skin to the aristocratic class, and it was the prevailing feeling not to degrade the poorest and humblest of the Caucasian race by lowering him to the level of the servile blacks. In this matter there was no difference of treatment in the homes of our wealthiest planters. This democratic hospitality was universal. Was it because there was no democracy, and because social position was unquestionably better defined than at present? Certain it is that those who at a more recent epoch were qualified with the appellation of «white trash» never or seldom suffered in the old *régime* from the insolence of birth, rank, or wealth. Almost all of those peddlers were foreigners, and it has been more than once my pleasant luck, in the course of years, to meet them or their descendants in palatial mansions both in New York and in Paris, or to hail their elevation to high official station in Louisiana.

Before retiring for the night all the members of the family respectfully saluted M. de Boré, and affectionately greeted one another. The same ceremony was repeated in the morning. It was a rule not to be infringed, and it had the good effect of preventing quarrels from being of long duration, for a reconciliation not merely apparent, but real, no doubt, would soon have been a forced conclusion. As to myself, boy that I was, in return for a kiss on my forehead I imprinted my lips on his caressing and paternal hand morning and evening, as if he had been a monarch to whom I paid a willing homage. I never heard him use a harsh word. His blue eye was calm and benevolent; but although I was inclined to have too strong a will of my own, yet such was the loving awe with which I regarded him that I would have preferred facing an infuriated bull than incur his displeasure, and I am conscious that the same feeling of veneration was shared by all those who approached him and fell within the reach of his moral influence.

He occupied at the table of refection a seat larger than any other, and appropriated to his own special use. It was placed at the centre of the long table, my mother sitting in front. When the bell rang, he was very punctual. His habit was to stand up a minute or two, until everybody was at his respective post. Then he waved his hand as an invitation to sit, and all sat down. After this had been done, any vacant seat remained unoccupied, because the slothful delinquent shrank from encountering a cold rebuke.

It was a fundamental rule that the Police Jury of the parish should meet at the sugarhouse of M. de Boré, and after adjourning, repair to his mansion for dinner. Whilst waiting for the convivial hour, the guests either remained gossiping on the broad piazza – I will not say *smoking*, for I never saw on such occasions the indulgence of so rare a habit at that epoch – or entertained themselves in the billiard-room. For any one of them to have retired before having staid to dinner would have been an infraction of decorous regard not to be thought of for one instant. Once, however, after the sitting of the Police Jury was over, and most of its members had assembled on the piazza, waiting for the grateful sound of the dinner-bell, one of that body, who had lingered at the sugar-house, was seen approaching on horseback, and wheeling into the pecan avenue which led to the public road, instead of coming to the house, where was the rest of the company.

«Who is he that is going away without taking leave of us?» asked M. de Boré, shading his eyes with his hand, the better to see.

«It is Mr. Avart,» answered somebody.

«Well,» exclaimed the old gentleman, «I will favor him with a lesson that will, I hope, turn to his profit.» He jumped on a chair, on which he stood as erect and conspicuous as possible, and shouted to the horseman who was slowly trotting away, «Mr. Avart! Mr. Avart!» The person thus addressed stopped and turned round as if to respond to the call. «No, no!» continued M. de Boré; «don't come back! don't come back! I hailed you merely to request you to carry my respects to your family» – with still greater emphasis – «my respects to your family! That's all. Now you may go.»

M. de Boré, although of the old *régime*, was an enthusiastic admirer of Napoleon. He had in his parlor a fine engraving of the battle of Austerlitz at the moment when General Rapp, on horseback and bareheaded, rushes with fiery haste into the presence of the Emperor, shouting, «Victory! victory! the enemy is annihilated!» To which Napoleon replies, «I never saw thee, Rapp, looking so handsome.» My father, born in Louisiana, was of Spanish origin, and loyal to his race to the very core of his heart. At the head of his bed there was hung up in a wooden frame his old coat of arms, in which figured the crowned head of Sultan Abderahman, defeated in the valley of Roncal, in Navarre, when attempting to cross the Pyrenees and penetrate into France, about the year 800 of our Lord. When Napoleon pushed his legions into Spain, Don Carlos Gayarré suppressed his feelings in the presence of his father-in-law, and out of respect for him. But at the announcement of any French triumph in the land of his ancestors he would retire moodily to the privacy of his bedchamber; then the angry tones of a guitar were heard, and a manly voice sang all those patriotic hymns which responded to the popular cry of «Death to the foe! war to the knife, and the knife to the hilt!» Thus the same family presented a rather strange compound. M. de Boré, the noble of the old *régime* and *mousquetaire* in the household troops of a Bourbon king, carried away by military enthusiasm, had become an imperialist and Bonapartist; Pierre Foucher, one of his sons-in-law, was a red republican, who had no liking for kings and priests; the other son, my father, was an intense royalist. And yet they all lived in perfect harmony, which shows that they possessed at least a large fund of good-breeding and forbearance.

There bubbles up in my memory at the present moment the recollection of an anecdote concerning this *mousquetaire* grandfather of mine. There was in France, under the reign of Louis XV., a bright-complexioned and educated mulatto from San Domingo or some other French West Indian island. He was named St. George, and is mentioned in some of the memoirs of the epoch as the most wonderful fencer that had ever appeared since the famous Creighton. Like this prototype, so far as manly exercises went, he was as skilful a shot as a swordsman. At twenty paces he never failed to hit a small nail on the head. He swam like a fish; and as to his feats of horsemanship, they were prodigious. One night, at a theatre in Paris, M. de Boré having the bad luck of displeasing a gentleman who occupied the next seat to his, they went out and crossed swords in the street by the light of the lamp-post. This was the way at that epoch to settle the slightest unpleasantness of this kind. M. de Boré was soon run through the body and stretched on his back. He was, however, consoled by the information that if vanquished, it had been by the invulnerable St. George. This colored duelist, who acquired quite a reputation for his exploits, as such, never was even scratched in his innumerable encounters. But it is reported that, on his having succeeded in obtaining a commission in the French army, he showed the white feather in the first general engagement with the enemy. On that occasion he felt, no doubt, that the marvellous skill on which he had hitherto so successfully relied could be of no avail to parry death.

M. de Boré was about thirty-two years old when he obtained permission to pay a second visit to Louisiana, where he was destined to settle at last and end his career. He was ready to embark, when he received the following note from the Comtesse de Rochechouart Montboissier, the wife of the Minister of War, addressed to him as *Mousquetaire Noir, à la Rochelle, Hôtel du Bien Nourri* (hotel of the well fed). These guardsmen were called black on account of the color of the horses they mounted.

> «Paris, 9*th January*, 1772
>
> «It is with great pleasure, sir, that I have undertaken to inform you that the commission of Captain which you seemed so much to desire has been granted to you *par le dernier travail de M. de Montboissier.* When the brevet is ready, he will forward it to you. He is very glad to have been able to render you this service. We both wish you a happy voyage and a speedy return to us, after having arranged your affairs in that country sufficiently to your satisfaction. If it should be possible for you to send me a hundred feathers like those with which you had the kindness to favor me, my obligation to you would be very great. The trimming of my dress is finished; it is superb; and as I am afraid of losing some of the feathers, I should be happy to be able to replace them. I beg to be excused for thus taxing too much your gallantry and generosity, for you have given me such a large quantity of those feathers that it looks as if I needed no more. I return to you my thanks in advance, and I entreat you to be convinced of the very great sincerity of the sentiments with which I have the honor to be, sir, your very humble and very obedient servant.
>
> «Rochechouart de Montboissier.
>
> «P. S. – M. de Montboissier requests me to address to you a thousand compliments on his behalf.»

Now that it is the raging fashion for women to adorn themselves so much with feathers of all sorts, it would probably interest our Louisianians of the fair sex to know, if possible, what were those colonial feathers which so vividly excited the gratitude of Comtesse Rochechouart de Montboissier, and no doubt the admiration of the court of Versailles in the days of Louis XV., one hundred and fourteen years ago.

On the Boré plantation, midway between the river bank and the cypress swamp, there was a depression in the land, where, in consequence of it, a large pond of standing water had been formed.

This pond, known far and wide, was called *La Mare à Boré* (the Boré pond). In any other country this sporting ground would have been jealously guarded, but in Louisiana this would have been looked upon with extreme disfavor. Hence this pond, or *Mare à Boré*, was treated as public property, without any interference from the owner. On Saturdays in particular, late in the afternoon, there used to come quite a battalion from New Orleans, mostly composed of the *élite* of the population of that city – lawyers, physicians, commission merchants, brokers, bankers, *e tutti quanti*. Among the members of the bar, Mazureau and John R. Grymes, who were celebrities, and Morel, also distinguished, may be cited as the most prominent. On such occasions we could hear from our dwelling-house a lively rattle of gun-firing, as if a skirmish was going on. Some even camped there, to be ready for the sport early on the next morning. Fires were lighted, tents erected, and the comforts and wants of the human body attended to with proper care. Sober and grave heads of families of high social standing, when in their hunting dress, not unfrequently thought themselves free to assume the liberties of a somewhat rakish crew; jokes were cracked, tales related by the blazing piles, pranks perpetrated, and to speak the unpleasant truth, there ensued, although rarely, quarrels that led to duels. Page after page could be written about the many occurrences which in those days contributed to the fame of *La Mare à Boré*. The negroes themselves had all sorts of tales to relate about it. Their superstitious imagination, which is always at work, connected that spot with hobgoblins and apparitions, among others the ghost of a colossal raccoon that seems to have claimed special jurisdiction over *La Mare à Boré*.

Once or twice a year there was on the plantation an occurrence which excited the most intense interest, particularly among the youthful portion of the population, white and black. It was when a drove of wild horses came from Texas or some other Mexican territory. Those animals looked so fiery and ungovernable that they seemed to have the devil himself in their bodies, and the men who led and owned them were evidently the denizens of some weird wilderness. They wore the broad Spanish *sombrero*, or hat; their faces were bronzed, and their eyes dark and piercing. They wore soft leather gaiters up to the knee, and that part of their breeches which was destined to an inevitable friction when they rode was lined also with leather. Stout and rough-looking brogans enveloped the foot up to the ankle, and their heels were armed with spurs six inches long, called *rakachias*. At their sight the joyous exclamation was heard, «Here are the *ouachinangs!*» All the juvenility of the locality and its neighborhood clapped their palms and shouted in anticipation of fun. These horses were for sale, and driven from plantation to plantation, where a market for some of them was always found.

It is remarkable how trifling events, apparently not worth remembering for more than a day, remain fresh in one's memory during a long life. Who knows what subtle influence for good or for evil such things may have? May not what appeared to the youthful mind but an unmeaning incident yet contribute by an unfelt process to the formation of character, and to habits of deportment in after-years? One day as our family, seated on the front piazza, was enjoying the balmy atmosphere of a bright May morning, there came on a visit from New Orleans M. de Boré's favorite nephew, whose name was Bernard de Marigny. He was one of the most brilliant and wealthiest young men of the epoch. He drove in a dashing way to the house in an elegant equipage drawn by two fiery horses. Full of the buoyancy of youth, he jumped out of his carriage and ran up the broad steps of the brick *perron* that ascended to the piazza. As he reached the top of it he said, with a sort of careless and joyous familiarity, «*Bonjour, mon oncle, bonjour,*» and bowed slightly round to the family without removing his hat. «*Chapeau bas, monsieur!*» responded a calm voice of command. «*Toujours chapeau bas devant une femme, et il y en a plus d'une ici.*» (Hat off, sir! Always hat off before a woman, and there are more than one here.) A fitting apology was instantly made by the youthful delinquent. Was the old *mousquetaire*, or guardsman, influenced on that occasion, unknowingly to himself, by the remembered example of Louis XIV., the gorgeous «*roi soleil*,» who never failed to bow to any woman, whatever her condition, whom he chanced to meet?

As to Madame de Boré, I was so young when she died that I have no distinct recollection of her. There remains in my mind but a sort of dim vision of a lady seated near a small round table with a white marble top encircled by a diminutive copper railing of half an inch in height. On that table there used to be a work-basket, and also a beautiful gold snuff-box in what is called the style Louis Quinze. I long preserved that snuff-box with infinite care; but during the war of secession a light-colored slave of the name of Wilson, whom I had drilled to be as accomplished a servant as could be found in any luxurious home, logically came to the conclusion that I was getting too poor to need his talents any more, and to satisfy his own epicurean tastes by high living. He had taught himself to read and write, and having by this means risen above the prejudices of his former ignorance, he determined to secede from me, and with much prudential foresight he suddenly and clandestinely departed, with my grandmother's snuff-box, together with an additional supply of diamonds and other trinkets. Being tender-footed and accustomed to ride like a gentleman, he considerately took two of my best mules, one for himself and one for a companion whom he invited to join him, for he always was very fond of society. After having disposed of the mules in a way of which I know nothing, he carried the rest of his plunder to New York, where he completed his education, and then returned to New Orleans. He now flourishes here like a green bay-tree, and is constantly employed as an indispensable attendant at balls and dinner parties given in the fashionable world. Considering his incontestable abilities, the seduction of his winning manners, and his everlasting smile, which would have secured him much profitable success in a certain line of business, I feel under no small degree of obligation to him for not having turned politician, and plundered the State with as much dexterity and impunity as he plundered me. It shows great moderation on his part, for which he is to be commended.

But to return to Madame de Boré, who had been educated at Versailles in the St.-Cyr Institution, founded by Madame de Maintenon. She must have been a prodigy of fascination, if I am to believe the old men who so frequently described her to me. One of them once exclaimed in a fit of enthusiasm, interrupted by an octogenarian cough, «*Cela eut valu la peine de faire cinquante lieues seulement pour voir Madame de Boré prendre une prise de tabac*» (it would have been worth while to travel fifty leagues merely to see Madame de Boré take a pinch of snuff).

Another admirer related to me the following anecdote as a specimen of her tact and dignity. In those days, which we may call remote, because between that past and the present there seems to be a lapse of five hundred years, it was the invariable custom at a set dinner to have the dessert enlivened by songs from the male guests. Once it happened that one of them hazarded a song which would not have been objectionable to a generation familiar with *La Belle Hélène* and *La Fille de Madame Angot*. It seemed indelicate to Madame de Boré. She hastened to interrupt the singer with these words: «Sir, I am so charmed with your song that I cannot resist the impulse to toast you at once. Ladies and gentlemen, fill your glasses, and let us drink to the singer's health.» It was difficult to convey reproof more gracefully.

Years had elapsed. I was in Paris, and visiting an aged relative of mine, a Louisianian, in her palatial mansion, Avenue de Marigny. I was alone with her in the reception saloon. In front of us, in a smaller saloon, in sight but not within hearing, there were two of her married daughters with the Comte de Talvande and the old Prince de Bethune – he whose red tomato face, strikingly framed with a profusion of snow-white beard and hair, was so exquisitely and amusingly reproduced in terra-cotta by Cham, the artist, and exposed in so many of the glass windows of Parisian shops. I noticed that my relative would now and then cast an uneasy glance at the group, who were talking and laughing a little rompishly. At last she said to me: «I am thinking of Aunt Boré. What would she have thought of such manners? One day a gentleman offered me a bouquet in her presence. She intercepted it before I could take it, and said to him, 'I thank you on behalf of my niece; but it would have been better to have presented the bouquet to me with a request to hand it over to her.'» I have mentioned these anecdotes as illustrative of an epoch which has passed away forever. I close what I have to say about this lady of the old *régime* by mentioning that my mother assured me of her never having been able to discover the smallest speck of a cloud in the conjugal sky of her parents.

M. de Boré had two male cooks with the necessary aids; one was a negro, and the other of a lighter color. The negroes are born cooks, as other less favored beings are born poets. The African brute, guided by the superior intelligence of his Caucasian master, in the days of slavery in Louisiana, gradually evolved into an artist of the highest degree of excellence, and had from natural impulses and affinities, without any conscious analysis of principles, created an art of cooking for which he should deserve to be immortalized. And how is it possible to convey to this dyspeptic posterity of our ancestors, to a thin-blooded population whose stomach has been ruined by kitchen charlatans, sauce and gravy pretenders, kettle and pot druggists, any idea of the miracles of the old creole cooking transmitted from colonial days, and growing fainter and fainter in dim traditions which have no meaning and no sense for this coarse-feeding generation? It had nothing in common with the much-vaunted culinary science of France. It was *sui generis*; it was not imitative; there was no traditionary lore about its origin; it had no ancestry; it sprang from itself. Pierre or Valentin, the colored cook, had not been taught by any missionary from foreign climes; he had not studied the records of roasting, baking, and boiling from the age of Abraham to the days of Master Jean or Mistress Jeanne on the banks of the Mississippi. He could neither read nor write, and therefore he could not learn from books. He was simply inspired; the god of the spit and the saucepan had breathed into him; that was enough. Good heavens! with what supreme, indescribable contempt would Aunt Henriette or Uncle Frontin have looked down upon the best French *cordon bleu* that had presumed to teach her or him! Sufficient to say that Marc Antony, if he had known a creole cook of the old *régime*, would have given him two or three of his best Asiatic provinces as a reward for feasting Cleopatra.

Gombo file! Gombo févis! Gombo aux

herbes! Gombo chevrettes, ou aux huitres! What do these things mean at present but vapidity of taste, instead of the licking of one's lips? And the soups? – the soups! not a ghost of them lingering on earth. Who knows how to roast? Who knows how to season *juste à point*? And the flavor? – the flavor! whither has it evaporated? How many delicious dishes have vanished forever of which the best cooks of France have never dreamed! To invent them it had required the constantly improving genius of several generations of apron-girt Sambos. Where is the last of them? What of a turkey fattened, stuffed, and roasted by him? Who but Sambo knew how to bake rice in an iron pot? I say *iron*, because it must be nothing else, and that rice must come out solid, retaining the exact shape of the pot, with a golden crust round its top and sides. You think this easy, presumptuous mortal. Well, try it, and let us see if your farinaceous production will have its required shape and color, and its precise proportion of salt and lard. I give it to you in a thousand. Who but Sambo ever made *grillades de sang de dinde*, looking and tasting like truffles? What a sauce! Where did he get that sublime composition? But time and space do not permit me to continue a description which, after all, is inadequately descriptive. I will content myself with saying that black Pierrot or yellow Charlotte, as a cook in the days of the Egyptian fleshpots in Louisiana, is not within the comprehension of any one born since the firing of the first gun against Fort Sumter. The effort must be given up. It would be attempting to grasp the infinite space. The last Brutus, alas! perished with the liberties of Rome, and what is perhaps more deplorable, the last creole cook could not survive the acquisition of his own liberty in Louisiana.

The furniture of M. de Boré, although abundant and comfortable, was very plain when compared with the exigencies of modern times. It was in the style of simplicity which prevailed in the dwellings of the wealthiest planters; but the table and the wines were superb. Every Sunday there were regularly, without any special invitation, a dozen or two of guests, who generally came from New Orleans. Among them the most assiduous were some Knights of St. Louis, who on such occasions never failed to carry their decoration dangling from the button-hole, such, for instance, as the Hazures, two brothers who dwelt, I believe, near Bayou St. John, on the Gentilly road. There was something in all those waifs of another age – in their appearance, in their dress, in their physiognomy, in their manners, in their peculiarities of conversation and language, in their bows and greetings, in their accent and modulations of voice – something which produced on me the most vivid impressions. They were monuments of the past, pyramids not in stones and cement, but in flesh and bones. There was in them what might have been called a lofty *je ne sais quoi*, to use a French locution. These men of the old *régime* seemed to entertain more esteem and respect for one another than we do now for our contemporaries. They evidently loved more to look up than to look down. They were not prodigal of their demonstrations of regard, but when expressed, it could be relied on as sincere, for they never hesitated to manifest their feeling of antipathy, reprobation, or opposition when necessary. As I grew in years I became more deeply struck with the faith which the men of that epoch reposed in one another, the more so because of the universal distrust of man's honor and integrity which I have observed spreading in later times over the whole surface of our community, like a stain of oil over a piece of carpeting. Well do I recollect when, in my youth, I delighted to listen to the conversation of those old men who still lingered on the stage after the days for acting were past. When they engaged in discussions on some point or other, I have sometimes seen the controversy settled at once by one of them observing, «I remember M. de Boré having said so and so on this matter.» «Ah, indeed! did he say so?» «Certainly.» «Well, then, of course –» And there was no more questioning of this and that.

«A change has come over the spirit of my dream.» The scenes I have witnessed, the things I have seen, have vanished forever. There is not a vestige, not a wreck's fragment, left of the Boré plantation, save myself, standing alone in the arid and parched wilderness of the past, forgotten, but trying in vain to forget and to close my eyes to the shapeless shadows that beckon me away. But enough. M. de Boré died seventy-eight years old. When on his death-bed, at his very last moments, he summoned me, boy that I still was, to his presence. Putting his hands on his grandson's head, he blessed him, and gave him his parting instructions and recommendations with a firm voice, a serene brow, a clear limpid eye, through which his soul eloquently spoke. I will repeat only his very last words: «Let no temptation ever betray you out of the path of honor and virtue. Keep your conscience always free from self-reproach, so that your death may be as calm as mine. Trusting in the mercy of God, I fear not to appear before his tribunal, where I hope not to grieve for you, when in due time we are to meet again, and when you shall render your accounts to Him. Farewell! Let your motto in this world ever be, *'Sans peur et sans reproche.'*»

M. de Boré ordered that his funeral and his tomb be as plain as could decently be, but that a thousand dollars, which might be spent in these vanities, be saved for a better use, and given to the Charity Hospital of New Orleans. It was done according to his request.

MADAME LALAURIE: A CONTEMPORARY FRENCH ACCOUNT

By L. Souvestre

Translated by Harriet Molenaer

The hideous story of Mme. Delphine LaLaurie's cruelty to her slaves in New Orleans in the 1830's is well known. The tale has lost nothing in the retelling through the years by various writers, who have not always agreed about the details. The early accounts range from the rather factual one which appeared in *Niles Register* on May 3, 1834, to the emotion-charged literary production of Harriet Martineau in her *Retrospect of Western Travel*, published in 1838. George W. Cable's «'The Haunted House' in Royal Street,» and Henry C. Castellanos' «A Tale of Slavery Times,» E Bunner's «Madame Lalaurie,» and Lyle Saxon's «The Haunted House» afford the reader the most complete accounts of Mme. Lalaurie's atrocities. It would seem that no new material on the affair would be likely to be added at this point.

But in the course of examining a file of the French language newspaper, *Le Courrier des Etats-Unis*, now known as *France-Amérique*, which the Louisiana Room of the Russell Library, Northwestern State College, received from the Cloutier family of Natchitoches in 1958, another contemporary account was discovered (Vol. XV, No. 81 [December 8, 1838], pp. 493-495.) Since it affords what purports to be an eye-witness account of the discovery of the mistreated slaves and also throws additional light on the career of the infamous Mme. Lalaurie after her flight from New Orleans, it is here given in full in English translation.

It has not been possible to identify the author of this French account. The article is signed simply «L. Souvestre.» An E. Souvestre, possibly Emile Souvestre (1806-1854), published a series entitled «Le Fort du Cedre» in *Le Courrier des Etats-Unis* in 1844. A Mme. Lesbazeilles-Souvestre, who is remembered chiefly for her French translation of Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, was also writing during this period. Neither can be shown to have written this article.

Furthermore, the narrator in this account, a Methodist minister, Dr. Miller, has not been identified. The literary quality of the account with its effective use of suspense and the skillfully contrived introduction of the bouquet of heliotrope as a device to identify Mme. Lalaurie suggest that this may have been an artistic elaboration of Harriet Martineau's story rather than a piece of factual reporting.

– Katherine Bridges

Dinner was over, and everyone had gone into the park. I had stopped near a summerhouse from which the eye took in, at a glance, the wooded areas of Saint-Cloud and the capricious windings of the Seine, when I saw, at the foot of the path, Doctor Miller coming to join me.

He was a Methodist minister who had arrived from America a few months before and who had been presented only that morning to Henri Varin at whose home we were. Up to this time I had had one long conversation with him which had shown him to be a man of singular distinction. I had, moreover, been struck by the mixture of seriousness and audacity, of inflexibility and gentleness, which was revealed in all his thoughts and all his decisions. It was the first time I had found myself in contact with one of these round-hatted missionaries, preaching without embarrassment in the midst of men of the world, passionately condemning evil, speaking of religion and virtue in the simple tone of a familiar conversation, and daring to attempt goodness without seeming to force it upon others. Doctor Miller, in short, had seemed to me the model of those Quakers of whom I had read so many stories in books, but for whom I had until then searched in vain in life.

It was, therefore, with a friendly gesture and a pleasant smile that I welcomed him to the entrance of the kiosk where I had stopped. I pointed out the marvellous countryside which spread at our feet and before which he remained for some time in silent contemplation.

At that moment, the sound of fresh and laughing voices rose to us. I leaned over and saw in the meadow the young women with whom we had just passed the day. The American suddenly became thoughtful.

«What do you call that woman dressed in white whom M. Henri Varin is escorting?» he asked me.

«Madame de Larcy.»

«Has she been in France long?»

«I didn't know she had ever lived abroad.»

«You know her?»

«As one knows someone in society; I meet her at Varin's every time I'm here.»

«Indeed,» the doctor responded, throwing me a thoughtful glance, «it seemed to me that she was much at home here.»

I could not repress a smile; he shook his head.

«How could M. Varin so quickly forsake his young wife?» he continued; «does he not see that she has divined everything and is dying of jealousy?»

I shrugged my shoulders sadly.

«And how has Madame de Larcy been able to gain such power over your friend?»

«Haven't you seen how beautiful the woman is, monsieur? When she was presented to you, you yourself seemed surprised and moved by that beauty, for you started.»

The doctor did not answer but appeared to reflect deeply.

«And has no one attempted to recall M. Varin to his duty?» he finally responded.

«It would have been in vain.»

«Is there no means of separating him from that woman?»

«Which one?»

Miller became silent and remained so a long time.

I began to fear that the doctor was either planning a sermon, for which I knew Varin was ill prepared, or would expose us to some embarrassing scene. I had always considered reformers so awkwardly indiscreet that I would even dissociate myself from this one. I ventured, in consequence, some observations on the uselessness of any attempt at reform in the case of our host. M. Miller undoubtedly realized my intention, for he said to me:

«Never fear, monsieur; I respect morality too much to expose it to a bad reception.»

Darkness approached and several strollers joined us. We returned together to the salon. The ladies were already there, and the conversation became general.

Doctor Miller had seated himself to one side, near a window, and his eyes never left Madame de Larcy. It would have been difficult to say just what sentiment dominated that attentive examination. The doctor's features lighted up at one instant as if all his doubts had been dissipated; then uncertainty again cast a cloud over them. Sometimes he bowed his head, listened to Madame de Larcy speaking without looking at her, and seemed to question her accent. Another time, he followed the movement of her lips with his eyes and thus, so to speak, watched her words formed and enunciated.

Madame de Larcy did not at first notice that searching gaze, but she finally observed it and seemed to be made uneasy by it. She turned in order to escape it and suddenly stopped speaking.

In every group, there is someone who rules and dominates – leader by good fortune, beauty, or intelligence. It is to him conversation is addressed. If he is silent, the talk stops like a watch whose mainspring is broken. Such a one was Madame de Larcy: since she had become silent, the sound of voices languished, then died, little by little.

Varin, made uneasy by this caprice, tried in vain to revive the conversation. After several useless efforts, he proposed setting up several tables of whist; but he met with general opposition. To play cards in the country! Boredom was a thousand times the better part! Some talked of reading, but without being able to decide on which book to choose.

«If we only had Larcy here!» cried Varin, disappointed. «He would tell us more of his travels in Africa and his adventures in the Atlas.»

«As for travels and adventures,» I said, in my turn, «I suggest Doctor Miller.»

«Of course, Doctor, you tell us something then,» said Varin. Miller bowed and tried to excuse himself.

«We will accept no excuses,» I cried. «You interested me too keenly this morning for me to let you off this evening. Come, sir, another of those stories you tell so well.»

The doctor smiled.

«Truly, I'm searching in vain among my

memories,» he said.

Then, catching himself up as though a shaft of light had struck him:

«I am wrong; there is one that I would like to tell you. The event occurred before my eyes, and I can vouch for all the details.»

Everyone gathered inquisitively around the doctor, who began thus:

«It was about six years ago that I arrived in New Orleans, where my work called me. It was the first time I had left the northern states, and I had been struck by the strange appearance that the French city presented. The women walked about the streets with heads covered by Spanish veils or bare; the graceful quadroons visited on the doorsteps, secretly challenging the passers-by with their soft glances. A huge population of negroes stirred about in every direction, speaking a strange French that I had never heard before. Foreigners, wearing all sorts of costumes, filled the public places. There was, moreover, a noisy confusion, a freedom of habits and of demeanor of which I have never seen the like.

«Surprised and alarmed by these new impressions, I resolved to combat them with reflection and solitude. I had letters to the principal inhabitants; I didn't present a one. And I busied myself exclusively with the affairs which had brought me.

«I lived on the bank of the river, a little below the corner where the railroad to Lake Pontchartrain had been constructed, a little distance from an elegant dwelling occupied by a creole widow. Madame Lalorie had been married three times; and her husbands, each of whom had died after a brief union, had left her a considerable fortune. She was noted for her charm, her elegance, her wit; no gathering sparkled without her, no merry-making was complete. I had met her one time at the home of a French merchant whose house was open to me. Her countenance had produced in me an almost sorrowful sensation. This woman was beautiful, but with a strange beauty, almost an evil beauty. I know not what terrible force she hid under the softness of her form. Her clear blue eyes had a keen fixity which forced one to lower his own; the smile on her rosy lips, rather than exciting confidence, inspired a sort of reserve. Everyone around her seemed under the sway of this instinctive fear. Her daughters, pale sad children whom some unknown evil tormented, never lifted their eyes in her presence. If she extended her hand to caress their curly heads, those heads were lowered with a frightened shudder. I had seen other children invite them in vain to join in their races and their songs; the children of Madame Lalorie *did not know how to play*. They usually kept to one side, pressed against one another as if for protection, mute and casting about them unquiet glances.

«This silent fright was shared by all who approached Madame Lalorie. Nothing seemed to justify it: she showed herself on every occasion tender toward her children, benevolent with her slaves, and she never addressed to them a word except in a gentle voice and the most amiable tone. One never heard a reprimand leave her lips. She smiled at everyone, never using any but familiar names and caressing terms. I had dined with her that one time at the home of the French shipowner. I had noticed that, after having moistened her lips with the wine that was served us, she passed the glass over her shoulder to her slave with a smile full of good will.

«Yet everyone commented on the gauntness and dejection of her numerous slaves. To see them, with their somber and suffering air around their gracious mistress, one might say that the condemned served an angel. Only one, the coachman, glowed with good health in the midst of that emaciated and sullen crowd. One asked oneself in vain the cause of that difference: his prosperity was a mystery as well as was the decay of his companions in slavery. All these circumstances which I noticed successively, unintentionally, excited my curiosity in the highest degree. Madame Lalorie had, from first sight, made a profound impression on me. I did not doubt that the life of that woman hid some strange secret.

«On the house where I lived there was a balcony where I went every evening, and from which the view spread across her domain. Often my gaze was turned toward it, seeking a sign which could help me divine that which she hid, but all was calm and silent in the dwelling of the young widow. One time only I had seen Madame Lalorie enter an outbuilding located at the bottom of the garden, and I had thought I heard stifled groans. Soon, though, the young woman had reappeared, tranquil and smiling. She had gone along the walks among the flower beds, lifting up the blossoms bruised by rain; then she had turned back, dreamily and slowly, tearing apart a magnolia blossom.

«Chance had acquainted me with an old negress of Madame Lalorie's called Rachel, whose grandson sometimes came to see me. He was a child of uncommon beauty and rare intelligence, and I was striving to instruct him in the truths of our religion. Mingo liked me and I was deeply interested in him. Two or three times, seeing him downcast, I ventured some questions about his mistress, but the child kept silent. Rachel, whom I questioned indirectly, equally could or would tell me nothing. I began to believe that my imagination had deceived me, and I ceased my surveillance of the French dwelling.

«One evening, though, I remained on the balcony later than usual. The air was scorching, and I avidly breathed in the breezes that rose from the river. All the stars were sparkling. In the midst of the calm of the night, the least sound traveled directly to me.

«I was leaning on the balustrade of the balcony, sunk deep in my thoughts, when a piercing cry made me start. I lifted my head. Two more cries rang out, one after the other. At the same instant, I saw in Madame Lalorie's garden what seemed like two shadows which passed rapidly. One of them, svelte and dressed in white, held in its hand a weapon which I couldn't identify and seemed to pursue the other, who fled. I saw the two of them dash toward the house, whose lighted windows shone out in the darkness, and ascend the stairs. They passed thus from floor to floor. Suddenly the black shadow appeared on the roof, still pursued. I saw it bend over the balustrade; I heard a cry, then a dull muffled sound like that of a body which is dashed to pieces. Then everything returned to silence! . . . The white shadow stood near the railing and looked down tranquilly.

«Soon, though, I saw it go down again. There was a movement in the house for some minutes; lights hurried from room to room. Finally, four slaves came slowly out, lanterns in hand. They lifted from the terrace something shapeless that they carried silently to the bottom of the garden. A grave was dug. At last the excavation was filled in, the slaves retreated, and everything became silent again.

«I had followed this scene with horror mixed with fright. I spent the night in a kind of delirium! When I went out the next day, Rachel was seated at the door of the house, her hands folded and her head hidden in her lap. I spoke to her twice without her hearing me; finally she lifted her head and her look frightened me.

«'Are you ill, Rachel?' I cried.

«The elderly negress shook her head.

«'Then what has happened to you?'

«She didn't answer. I looked about me.

«'Where is Mingo?' I demanded.

«At that name, Rachel uttered a cry. She leaped up and striking the earth with her foot with a terrible gesture:

«'There! there!' she cried; 'my child, his eyes closed!'

«And, covering her face with her hands, she turned back into the house.

«Now I understood everything. I went to the house of an American planter who was my relative, and I told him what I had seen. He took me to the magistrates, to whom I made my deposition. An inquiry was begun the same day; but I do not know what it revealed, for the French party succeeded in hushing up the affair. One knew only that the fact of *illegal cruelty* had been proven in the case of nine of Madame Lalorie's slaves, who were consequently confiscated and sold for the benefit of the state. I had not been called as a witness, and my name had not appeared in this affair. Madame Lalorie, who had seen me without noticing me and who did not know me, was not aware of the part I had taken. I carefully avoided meeting her; the sight of that woman made me ill. I imagined I still saw her pursuing Mingo and gazing coldly at his corpse at the foot of the terrace.

«The months passed, however, and the gossip which had spread for a moment about the beautiful widow's cruelty toward her slaves was stilled. Thus, sought after as always, her salon was open to all the aristocracy of New Orleans: her house was pointed out for its elegance and opulent hospitality. Admirers continued to surround her; and, if anyone dared venture to recall the past, doubts were raised – they objected because of the known gentleness of the young widow; they boasted of her affecting graces; and they ended by treating as calumnies the whispered accusations to which she had been exposed.

«Matters were at this stand, when one day the alarm was heard – fire was just taking hold at Madame Lalorie's! Immediately everyone hurried toward her house at the corner of Quartier and Royal streets. She had sold her place to a company which had established vast cotton compresses. Aroused by the noise, I followed the crowd. The fire was appearing in the outbuildings where the kitchens were. At the moment we arrived, the flames spurted out across the roofs, where they scattered in sparks. On the property there was no means of arresting the progress of the fire; everyone was awaiting the fire engines, which had not yet arrived.

«All eyes were turned toward that part of the building which was burning, when suddenly a loud scream rose from the midst of the flames, a window opened, and a woman appeared there: it was Rachel, who shook her arms with menacing rage.

«A frightened exclamation rose at her appearance, and with an involuntary movement the crowd drew near the building. But the flames repulsed all approach. However, Rachel leaned out of the window and pointing to the fire which was spreading toward the house:

«'Burn, mistress! Burn, mistress!' she

cried, beating her hands together with an insane laugh. 'Avenge Mingo! Avenge me! Avenge all the blacks!'

«And she fell back exhausted. During this time, a ladder had been brought. It was placed at the window and a young man mounted. Arriving near the old negress, he tried to lift her, but couldn't.

«'She is chained!' he cried suddenly.

«'Yes, yes, this poor black, chained in the entry for six months', babbled Rachel. 'Mistress want poor Rachel to cook good dinners for her . . . But Rachel have too much trouble. Rachel think about Mingo. Rachel start the fire to die.'

«At that moment, the flames reached the window, and the young man was forced to descend. We saw the old negress lift herself up with a woeful cry, twist about for an instant in the midst of the fire, and then fall back and disappear.

«A long sigh of horror had stirred the crowd. Oaths were beginning to rise when the firemen arrived. The fire, which they were not able to stop, reached the neighboring windows, which were carefully closed. The crowd was going to that side, when Madame Lalorie herself appeared at a window. She was pale; her hand trembled slightly as she pressed it against the railing. A murmur arose; then there was silence.

«'The keys!' was the cry from all sides.

«'Let the kitchens burn, gentlemen,' the pretty woman said in a troubled voice.

«But the crowd didn't listen.

«'The keys! the keys!' a hundred voices repeated.

«'I don't have them.'

«'Then let the doors be forced!'

«The doors yielded. There was a movement, then a long murmur began . . . But Madame Lalorie had retired precipitately. I had entered among the first; and, if I lived a thousand years, I should never forget the sight which struck my eyes. Nine posts had been set up in a circle in a low, dark room. At the two first hung corpses that were already skeletons. To the other seven were chained slaves: some had their hands fastened above their heads; others were twisted on themselves without being able to straighten out; still others, necks encircled by heavy collars, were fixed to the stake in eternal immobility. No appearance of humanity remained to them. There was a something impossible to name and that one sensed only as a doleful shuddering and a dull groaning. Their bodies were formed of one immense sore on which the whips had left deep grooves. In the midst of the circle formed by the posts a platform rose, skillfully situated so that the blows could be better placed; and it was still damp with reddish filth. The whip, stiff with blood, hung there!

«After the first shock, people hurried to break the chains of the seven slaves who still lived and to carry them into the open air. Two died in our hands on seeing the sun. The others, stronger, were able to respond to the questions which were put to them. We learned then that these nine slaves, of whom only five survived, were those that had been confiscated from the widow and had been sold for the benefit of the state. Wishing to avenge herself for their testimony, Madame Lalorie had had them bought back and secretly taken to her home. Since then, she had kept them shut up in that place, where she had everything arranged for their torture.

«Each morning, this elegant, frail woman came to the top of the bloody platform to exercise her insatiable revenge. With the whip in hand, a kind of joyous madness possessed her; her strength revived at the sight of the wounds and the smell of blood. She savored with delight the dying flesh, the shriveling limbs, the life quivering and expiring under her blows. She abandoned herself to joy a thousand times over – horrible madness, which enjoyed only the woe of others and found pleasure only in their agony!

«The crowd had, at first, listened silently to all these details given by the slaves; but their indignation, which curiosity had for the moment contained, was not slow to take over. The uproar which had hushed started up again. The negroes, come from all parts of the city, looked on with somber air; and the whites, frightened by the thought of the reactions which such a discovery could lead to, vented their wrath with great cries.

«Already threats were becoming more direct, more immediate, for, in America, public opinion passes swiftly from words to deeds. The habit of wielding power gives the people confidence in their strength; and when the cry of all is raised, execution follows on the heels of judgment. Madame Lalorie was not unaware of this and she knew, too, what the provocation of the crowd was. The throng grew by the moment.

«Cries of 'Death!' had already been uttered. The more eager were seeking to find a passage to the house, determined to enter by force, when suddenly Madame's carriage appeared, the coachman in his place. The door of the entry opened: the creole, richly dressed, face calm and lips smiling, entered nonchalantly breathing the fragrance of a bouquet of heliotrope. At that sight, cries were stilled: the noise ceased; everyone remained, for a moment, stupefied.

«The black coachman profits: he cleaves the crowd; he advances; he passes beyond them as the muttering begins in the distance. The first moment of surprise past, angered by such audacity, they try to stop the insolent turnout; but it has already reached the narrow jetty that leads to Lake Pontchartrain. Pursuit is useless, for it is ahead of them and the horses fly like light!

«The more rabid ones tried, however, but in vain. When they arrived at the lake, Madame Lalorie had embarked on a small ship, the sails of which were already disappearing over the horizon! Only the carriage was left at the edge of the lake – it was upon that the popular indignation was vented. The carriage was torn to pieces; the horses stabbed. When it was known in New Orleans that the creole had escaped, the fury was transferred to the house, which was demolished in a few hours.»

Everyone had listened to the doctor's story with growing attention. When he was done, they cried out: «What became of that horrible woman?»

«I did not know yesterday,» the doctor answered.

«And – today?»

«Today . . . I have seen her!»

«What do you mean?»

«She is here!»

Exclamations were heard on all sides; everyone got up.

Darkness had come during the American's story, and the gloom was profound. There was a moment of terror.

A footman entered with lights; all eyes were turning from side to side with a kind of doubt and frightened curiosity.

«Monsieur!» cried Varin bewildered, starting toward Miller, «in heaven's name! finish . . .»

As his only reply, the doctor pointed to the place of Madame de Larcy, which was empty. At that moment, the sound of a carriage was heard. everyone hurried to the window . . . a caleche, driven by a negro, appeared and passed rapidly under the balcony. Madame de Larcy was seated there, calm and proud, holding in her hand a bouquet of heliotrope.

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THE STATE OF SLAVERY

By Major Amos Stoddard

Experience has long since convinced the more intelligent planters, that the profits they derive from the labor of their slaves are in proportion to the good or bad treatment of them. But those planters of an opposite character are much the most numerous, perhaps they form nine tenths of the whole, especially among the French and Spanish settlers in Lower Louisiana. In no part of the world are slaves better treated than in the Mississippi Territory, where the planters generally allow them salted meat, as much corn meal as they can consume, cows to furnish milk for their families, land for gardens, and the privilege of raising fowls. They also allow them one suit of clothes for summer, and another for winter. Their slaves are active and robust, and enabled to perform their allotted portions of work with ease. Such treatment renders them contented and honest, and punishments are rare among them. Each good slave, well clothed and fed, will yield a yearly clear profit of two hundred and fifty or three hundred dollars. No small degree of satisfaction is derived from the performance of good actions; and happy is he, who is not accused by his conscience of aggravated wrongs done to the human species.

When we pass into Louisiana, we behold a different and more disgusting picture. The French and Spanish planters, in particular, treat their slaves with great rigor; and this has been uniformly the case from the first establishment of the colony. They were at first too poor to supply their slaves with clothing and food. Add to this, their families stood in need of the avails of their labor; and every expense incurred on account of their comfort and support was viewed as a serious evil. Hence this original defect in the system has been considered as a precedent by subsequent generations, not because they view the examples of their ancestors with reverence, but because they conceive it redounds to their interest. These planters are extremely ignorant of agricultural pursuits, and of the quantum of labor in the power of a slave to perform in a given time. Few of them allow any clothing to their slaves, or any kind of food, except a small quantity of corn; and even this they are obliged to pound, or grind, while they ought to be at rest. The consequence is, that the slaves are extremely debilitated, and incapable of much labor. One well fed negro is nearly equal to three of them. Their masters and overseers affect to believe, that their want of industry arises from laziness, and a perverse disposition. Hence cruel and even unusual punishments are daily inflicted on these wretched creatures, enfeebled, oppressed with hunger, labor, and the lash. The scenes of misery and distress constantly witnessed along the coast of the Delta, the wounds and lacerations occasioned by demoralized masters and overseers, most of whom exhibit a strange compound of ignorance and depravity, torture the feelings of the passing stranger, and wring blood from his heart. Good God! why sleeps thy vengeance! why permit those, who call themselves christians, to trample on all the rights of humanity, to enslave and to degrade, the sons and daughters of Africa!

The evils of the slave system in Louisiana may, in a great measure, be attributed either to the want of energy or intelligence among the governors of that province. As their appointments were limited to short periods, seldom extending beyond five years, the accumulation of wealth was the predominant motive of their actions, and some of them did not hesitate at the means. They neglected the great concerns of the province; no attempts were made to populate it till since the American revolution; no encouragement was afforded to agriculture and commerce, nor to manufacture and the arts. An exception, however, must be made in favor of the Baron Carondelet, to whom the province is more indebted than to all his predecessors. He saw and lamented the deranged state of this portion of the dominions of Spain; and while he was devising and carrying into effect some salutary regulations for the improvement of the country, he was removed to another government. Yet, during his administration, he repaired the fortifications at New Orleans, improved the commerce of the province, and greatly increased the population of Upper Louisiana. The wretched condition of the slaves, over whom their masters exercised an almost despotic power, did not escape his attention. But such were the inveterate prejudices and habits, and even customs, which he had to encounter, that he despaired of a complete renovation, and therefore aimed only to mitigate the wounds he was unable to heal.

In 1795 he published an ordinance on the subject, by which he established the monthly allowance of corn in the ear, to each slave, at one barrel. It was recommended to masters to assign waste lands to their slaves for the purpose of enabling them to raise the necessaries of life; and if this allowance was denied them, they were obliged to furnish each of them with a linen shirt and trowsers for summer, and a woollen great coat and trowsers for winter. Labor was to commence at the break of day, and to cease at the approach of night. Half an hour was allowed for breakfast, and two hours for dinner. Slaves were allowed on Sundays to rest, or to work for themselves, except in time of harvest, when their masters were authorised to employ them, paying them about thirty cents each *per diem*. Punishments at one time, under a penalty of fifty dollars, were not to exceed thirty lashes; but the stripes were allowed to be repeated after the interval of a day. It was permitted to fire on armed negroes, who had deserted their masters; also on those unarmed, if they refused to submit when required, or presumed to defend themselves against their masters or overseers; and likewise on those who entered a plantation with an intent to steal. Those who killed or wounded a negro, except in the above cases, were threatened with the severest penalties of the law. The amusements among slaves were restricted to Sundays; and the planters were forbidden, under a penalty of ten dollars, to suffer any strange negroes to visit their plantations after dark; and they were also forbidden, under a like penalty, to permit any intrigues or plots of escape to be formed on their plantations by negroes belonging to others. No slave was permitted to leave the plantation of his master without a written permission, under a penalty of twenty lashes; and if any slave was found riding the horse of his master without the like permission, he was liable to receive thirty lashes. Fire arms, powder, and lead, found in the possession of slaves, were liable to confiscation; and such slaves were adjudged to receive thirty lashes. No planter was allowed to employ more than two slaves to hunt for him at the same time; and on their return from the chase they were obliged to deliver up their arms. No slave was allowed to sell any thing, not even the productions of his own labor, without the permission of his master.

This picture, however dark and deformed it may appear, exhibits many favorable traits, when compared with the slave system in operation before the administration of the Baron: yet a man of reflection, unacquainted with slave policy, would be apt to consider even this as the production of some Goth or Vandal, designed to disfigure and to brutalize the image of the Creator. The labor imposed on slaves is equal to the powers of the most robust men; and yet for their subsistence they are tantalized with a small pittance of corn, which they are obliged to grind or pound for themselves, and also with the hard choice of a little waste land, which they have not time to cultivate, or a few rags to hide their nakedness, or to guard them against the severity of the weather. Hunger and labor render them feeble, and the calves of their legs are as flabby as the dulap of a cow. Those who have the greatest number of slaves, treat them the worst; avarice is the hydra of their cruelty.

Authors have remarked, that the bitterness of slavery is more severe in free than in arbitrary governments. According to this sentiment the slaves in the United States were always worse treated than those in Louisiana; but this was not the case, though the sentiment holds good with respect to the Spanish provinces, where, in consequence of a late revolution in their slave system, slaves are treated with kindness, and even live as well as their masters. If they acquire sufficient money to purchase their time, the law directs their ransom. Those treated improperly have a right to demand *letters of sale*, and are authorised to seek new masters for themselves. If they are refused this privilege, the magistrate of the place examines into the nature of the complaints, and, if well founded, grants the permission required, or disposes of the injured slaves at public vendue. Instances of the latter kind often occurred in Louisiana.

It is a stain on the character of civilized nations, that slavery was ever authorised among them; and how a christian people can reconcile it to their consciences, no one can determine, except it be on account of interest. Here then we find a motive for all our actions, much more powerful than the dictates of morality and religion. While we keep so many of our fellow creatures in bondage, let us cease to talk about liberty and the rights of man; let us not claim for ourselves what we deny to others. The slavery occasionally imposed on some of our citizens by the Barbary powers, has more than once excited the sympathy and indignation of the United States. Those the most clamorous for revenge, whether individuals or organized bodies, and the most forward to condemn the practice of those powers, seem not aware, that they stand self-convicted of the same offence; the censures they bestow on the pirates of the Mediterranean, are so many libels on their own conduct. Modesty dictates, that we be more reserved on the subject of personal liberty, at least till we emancipate those whom we retain in bondage. With what justice can we demand the enjoyment of a right, when at the same time we prohibit it to others?

We all know, that slavery is coeval with history, perhaps with the world. The sources of this system among the ancients were various; particularly the absolute power exercised by parents over their children, either to kill, or to sell them; and likewise that of disposing of their criminals and insolvent debtors, as well as their prisoners taken in time of war.

To the disgrace of America, and of human nature, negro slavery has its origin on our continent. The benevolent father De las Casas, the advocate of oppressed humanity in the new world, exclaimed against the slavery of the Indians; and, finding his efforts of no avail, proposed to Charles V, in 1517, the slavery of the Africans as a substitute. This proposal had the effect of lightening the chains of the natives, and of forging new ones for the inhabitants of another hemisphere. The Spaniards, however, from some religious scruples, refused at first to engage in the importation of slaves from Africa; though they eased their consciences by opening their ports to their admission, and by employing other nations to traffic for them. The Abbe Raynal says, that about nine millions of negroes were landed in the Spanish colonies, and that less than fifteen hundred thousand existed in his time. Such an amazing diminution of the Africans must be attributed to barbarous cruelty. The example of the Spaniards was soon followed by other European nations.

The most substantial argument in favor of slavery, is derived from the right of the strongest. The origin of this right may be traced to the dark ages of barbarism. Modern civilized nations do not sell their children, nor enslave their insolvent debtors, nor even their prisoners of war, to whose services they have some shadow of claim; but they depredate on the harmless and inoffensive Africans, merely to gratify their avarice, without the least provocation, and without any apprehended danger of their power. The laws of most European nations disclaim the right of slavery; and the great oracle of English jurisprudence declared some years ago from the bench, that, by the laws of that kingdom, a right of property could not exist in the human species. The common law of the United States recognizes the same doctrine. If slavery be maintained in some of the individual states and territories, it is by virtue of particular statutes, added to the mutual concessions inserted in the federal constitution.

Slave-holders pretend to justify negro slavery on two grounds. The first is, that other nations still continue the practice; and therefore to abandon it themselves would have no sensible effect on the general system. The second is, that the slaves they purchase were reduced to this condition in their own country; and therefore they are now in as eligible a situation as if they had never crossed the ocean.

This reasoning has no better foundation than avarice; and to this single quality of the mind must be attributed all the miseries of the many millions of human beings in bondage. Can the wickedness of other nations be justly adduced as an apology for our own? If precedent be allowed to sanctify crimes, why are robbers and murderers exposed to the vengeance of the laws? If other nations have done wrong, it becomes us to avoid the pernicious example. Were we to adopt some plan for the gradual abolition of slavery, it might possibly have some effect on the policy of others. We have prohibited the importation of slaves; Great Britain has done the same; and some other nations appear inclined to abandon the traffic. These prohibitions will induce slave-holders either to treat their slaves with more kindness, and by this means enable them to preserve their number by propagation; or they will gradually waste away under the rigors of their fate, and eventually become extinct. However, none of the consequences of either case strike at the root of the evil.

To purchase Africans, who were reduced to bondage in their own country, is as criminal as to purchase those of a different description. The wars among the tribes of Africa are mostly fomented by slave merchants, and these merchants secure millions of prisoners merely for the purposes of traffic. Is it no crime to tear men from their countries, families, and friends? The Africans are not destitute of sensibility, and they frequently manifest it in a manner, which does honor to human nature. The indignity and cruelty with which they are treated, often induce them to put a period to their existence, even in the presence of their masters and overseers; and shall we conclude, that this is the effect of insanity rather than of a greatness of soul? When the whites cease to purchase slaves, wars in a great measure will cease among the Africans, and their numerous tribes enjoy as much peace and harmony as other nations in the same circumstances. There are physical evils enough in the world without the addition of artificial ones; and it becomes us as men and as christians to provide against the asperities of the former, and to prohibit the creation of the latter.

Notwithstanding the guards placed on the slave system by the constitution and laws, and by the treaty of cession, which secures to the Louisianians the enjoyment and perpetuity of their rights, perhaps a way may be devised to remove this badge of our disgrace, without an infringement of either. It must be admitted, that the right of property in slaves cannot be invaded; yet doubts may arise as to the extent of this right, and it will be necessary to ascertain it with precision. The laws of some nations impose on the child the condition of the mother; the consequence is, that the children of freemen are often born slaves, and many of them drag out their existence in servitude under their own fathers. Louisiana presents at least one instance of melancholy depravity; the father disposed of several of his children as slaves, together with their mother. Among some nations the contrary principle obtains; the child born of a female slave follows the condition of the father. This principle is much more just than the other, though it is attended with one difficulty not easily removed; the father cannot be so readily ascertained as the mother. At any rate, this kind of right, from the very nature of things, is limited to actual slaves; it does not attach till they are in existence; it is not present and absolute, but contingent and future. If this position be correct, and it is supported by some good authorities, it seems to follow, that the legislature may provide for the emancipation of the children of slaves, at any age it pleases, born at some stipulated future period. Were such a measure adopted, it is easy to see, that a gradual abolition of slavery would take place among us. Perhaps this plan is less objectionable than some others, which have been frequently suggested; and it may be so modified and extended as to embrace a provision for the benefit of the objects of it.

The advocates of slavery not only contend, that the child ought to follow the condition of the female parent, but that the right of the master extends to the *possible* issue of the mother *ad infinitum.* The consequence of this doctrine is that slavery must continue as long as female slaves propagate their species; and that, to provide for the emancipation of future generations, would be illegal and unconstitutional. This doctrine obtains in many parts of the United States, particularly in the Indiana Territory; in which «slavery and involuntary servitude» are expressly prohibited by the ordinance of 1787. The obvious construction of this prohibition is, that the slaves at that period in existence were entitled to their freedom; or at least, that the children of female slaves, born after the adoption of the ordinance, were born free. If therefore the doctrine already mentioned be correct, they can claim no legal exemption from slavery, and of course the prohibition is a nullity. The practice in that territory seems to correspond with this strained and pernicious construction of the ordinance. Slave property, while it exists, ought not to be infringed; and if no legal means can be devised to abolish it, let it be perpetual.

It is difficult, even for men of moderate tempers, to suppress their indignation at one of the pretexts adduced in support of slavery, that the whites are unable to labor in some climates on account of the excessive heats! If we be allowed to consult our convenience without regard to the means; if each white is at liberty to make fifty or a hundred blacks wretched and miserable to promote his interest, and to gratify his avarice; then let us abandon our moral and political creeds, and study only to render our consciences inaccessible to remorse. The God of nature never intended, that one part of the human race should be governed by the whims and caprices of the other; nor that artificial evil should become a substitute for attainable good. The pretext is futile in every point of view. Nature has fitted men for labor in the climate where they are born and educated. A citizen of Georgia is as well qualified to labor in that state as a Yankee in New England; the effects of heat and cold are about the same on both. Add to this, it so happens, that in the warm latitudes the lands are much more prolific, and much more easily cultivated, than in colder ones; of course less labor is required to gain subsistence. The native inhabitants of Lower Louisiana experience no inconvenience from the heats; and those employed in navigating the rivers are exposed to more fatigue than is common to any other class of our citizens. Besides, in that country, and in the Mississippi territory, hundreds of families from the middle and eastern states, have planted themselves. For several years after their arrival, their characteristic industry was evident; and they experienced no dangerous effects from the climate, except a troublesome lassitude for the two or three first years. The accumulation of wealth enabled them to purchase slaves; after which, like their neighbors, they contracted habits of indulgence. The heats, therefore, furnish no material obstruction to manual labor; and the effects of them in the southern states and territories are more than counterbalanced by the exuberant nature and the valuable productions, of their lands. Much indeed is due to the people of slave states, to whom slavery has become familiar from long habit, and, perhaps, in their view, necessary to their prosperity, if not to their existence. Their feelings, and even prejudices, are entitled to respect; and a system of emancipation cannot be contrived with too much caution.

The fact is, that the people of the eastern states experience more inconvenience from the rigors of the seasons than those of the south. In New England the mercury sometimes rises to one hundred degrees, and as often falls twenty degrees below *zero*. The extremes of heat are greater in New England; but they are not of so long continuance, nor is the air so humid and unelastic as in the southern parts of the union, which are doubtless more or less prejudicial to health. Still these traits are more tolerable than the opposite extreme in New England, where the country is covered with snow, and bound in icy chains for nearly six months in the year. Both men and beasts suffer from the rigors of winter; and the necessary subsistence for them, is obtained at a prodigious expense and labor. In Lower Louisiana the whites may labor nine months in the year, without experiencing any inconvenience from the heats; and three months labor in that quarter is productive of more real value than twelve months in New England. Add to this, cattle and swine need no other food than what the earth spontaneously yields; and every planter has it in his power to supply himself with almost any number he pleases. In whatever light, therefore, we view the subject, the greatest advantages are attached to the southern states and territories.

The pernicious system of slavery deserves reprehension from another motive. No country can become populous where it prevails; and this truth is attested by numerous examples. We need cast our eyes only on the West-India Islands, and on the southern states of the union. No part of the country possesses a more happy climate, or a better soil, than the great state of Virginia; yet her white population is comparatively small. Kentucky is a slave state; and if her population be considerable, it must be attributed to accidental causes, which are not difficult to explain. The state of Ohio is now in its infancy: slavery is excluded from her bosom; and this very circumstance will induce a rapid population, augment her strength and resources, and soon enable her to rise superior to her neighbor.

THE FREE MEN OF COLOR OF LOUISIANA

By P.F. de Gournay

The initials F.M.C. have no longer any meaning, and may even puzzle some of the younger generation. They were once attached as an indelible stigma to the names of people, otherwise respectable, whose parentage was not immaculately white. Wherever one of these names had to be written – in a deed of conveyance, a marriage-license, a certificate of birth or death, even in a newspaper report – the fatal F.M.C. must be appended, putting the fact on record that the bearer of that name was a «free man of color.» Many a high-toned, educated man has winced under this unavoidable affront. There was no remedy: it was the law, – *dura lex, sed lex*. The status of the colored man must be clearly defined; a freeman, he had certain rights which must be protected; yet it would not do to leave a flaw through which he or his children might afterwards claim equality with his betters.

The peculiar position of the F.M.C.'s of Louisiana presents a chapter of history which is of curious interest to the student. In the ante-bellum days there were, no doubt, free people of color in all parts of the Union; but in no other slave-holding State were they ever so numerous as in Louisiana, – particularly in the city of New Orleans, – nor did they occupy the same peculiar status in the social body. The colored people in New Orleans were divided into classes between which the line was drawn far more distinctly than any that existed among the whites. Degrees of color had nothing to do with these divisions. Lowest in grade were the ex-slaves who had been manumitted by a kind master or had purchased their freedom. Ignorant, and with no very high aspirations, they followed the humbler callings and petty trades, content with earning their living, and looking up to their former masters for advice and guidance.

Owing to the loose ethics which tolerated amalgamation, the daughters of this class furnished the numerous *hétaïres* who graced the farfamed «quadroon balls» of olden times – one of the curious sights of New Orleans which no stranger failed to see – and made possible those irregular *ménages* the like of which could not be found in any other American community. Men of good social standing kept a mulatto mistress, the daughter of an ex-slave. Nor should it be understood that the practice was confined to the Creoles: foreigners and men from other States succumbed just as easily to the temptation. Ignorance, the attraction possessed by a superior race, the warm African blood that flowed in their veins, all combined to ruin these women; just as poverty, ignorance, and the temptations of luxury combine in European countries to ruin the daughters of the people. These women were to New

Orleans what the *grisettes* and *lorettes* are to Paris,—with this difference, however, that the white man, while devoted to his colored mistress and rearing a family of quadroon children by her, never dared to defy public opinion by walking the streets with them or taking them to a public place of resort. This concession made, his offence was condoned: all that society asked was that the proprieties should be respected. If the practice was tolerated, it was far from being generally followed, however; nor was laxity of morals general among this lower and uneducated class of colored people. No picture can be true in which the shadows are left out, and the conscientious writer who deals with facts is bound neither to conceal nor to disguise.

Far above this degraded class was what may be justly called the «colored aristocracy,»—those who could boast of several generations of freedom and legitimacy. Some of the members of this class were pure blacks, but the greater number were of various degrees of mixed blood,—some even so white that only the experienced eye of a Southerner could detect the faint taint. They were, for the greater part, descendants of the old French colonists, and had inherited the name and much of the property of their ancestors. «To the manner born,» they were as proud as their white cousins of the name «Creole,» and thought themselves superior to all other colored people. The law prohibiting free negroes from other States or countries from taking up their abode in Louisiana tended to strengthen this feeling of superiority. These people, in general, had received as good a common-school education as the average citizen. They were engaged in various branches of business, as grocers, dry-goods merchants, manufacturers, exchange brokers, and real estate agents. They were as honorable in their dealings as their white neighbors. Some were quite wealthy. A few years before the war, it was shown that one-fifth of the taxable property in New Orleans was held by free people of color.

Yet they had no share in the management of municipal affairs. An effort was made once to remedy this state of things. The question of free suffrage was being agitated, and the colored property-holders appealed to some friendly politicians to take up their case. «Is it not strange,» they said, «that the foreigner, simply because he is white, should, after a short probation, be invested with all the rights and privileges of a citizen, though he may not contribute one dollar to the public treasury and may not care a straw for your institutions, which he is often too ignorant to understand, and that men born on the soil, who love their country dearly and know and respect its laws, should be denied a small share of these privileges, for no other reason than that they are not of pure Caucasian blood? We accept the position of social inferiority resulting from our color. We do not claim the political franchise in its full sense. But we have large interests at stake in the city, and it were but just that we, as taxpayers, should have some thing to do with selecting the men who assess our property. Let them be white men, but grant us the privilege to vote for such of you as possess our fullest confidence.»

The justice of this claim was generally admitted, and some of the most liberal-minded advocates of free suffrage were in favor of extending the franchise, under certain restrictions, to this class of tax-payers. But the question presented many difficulties, and, to some minds, appeared fraught with danger. An invidious distinction would have to be made between the tax-paying F.M.C.'s and those who did not own property: this might lead to jealousies and strife; it would be, moreover, against the very spirit of the doctrine of free suffrage. Then such a law as was contemplated, while it would make the tax-paying colored men municipal electors, must declare them to be ineligible. Besides these objections, the timid thought such an innovation might be but an entering wedge, opening the way to further concessions. Like so many other social problems which baffle the economist and the legislator, the question of a «limited extension of the right of suffrage» was given up as insoluble. Few, at this day, remember that it was ever agitated.

The law protected the colored man's person and property: beyond that were the social questions which no legislation can settle. These presented singular contradictions. In their business intercourse with the whites the F.M.C.'s were treated with the courtesy due to equals. No respectable white man would have insulted or ill-treated a colored man, unless under extraordinary provocation. In a community where the duello was countenanced, it would have been deemed disgraceful and cowardly to insult one who could not demand satisfaction. A gentleman did not think he demeaned himself by shaking hands with a colored man, inviting him to sit down in his office, and chatting pleasantly with him about business and the news. He might find his conversation interesting and take pleasure in meeting him often, but there ended their social intercourse; he could not eat or drink with him. As to inviting him to his house, he would not dream of committing such a breach of the proprieties. On the other hand, the doors of the colored man's house were jealously closed against his white neighbor. His home was his sanctuary, his world, where he acknowledged no superior. In the crowd of buyers who attended the public sales of real estate held in the rotunda of the Saint-Louis Exchange, there might have been noticed many well-dressed, dark-visaged men, bidding spiritedly on some valuable piece of property and exchanging a pleasant remark or a courteous bow with some well-known citizen. The sale over, the thirsty buyers would direct their steps towards the elegant bar in the adjoining room, but these dark-hued men would pass straight out without even casting a look on the tempting array of refreshments. And if a stranger had inquired, «Are all these temperance men?» he would have been answered, «Why, no; they are colored men; they can't drink here.» In the theatres the upper tier, or gallery, was allotted to the colored people. As it was generally crowded with slaves and low blacks, the respectable colored men abstained from going to the play, although the passion for shows of all kinds is strong in the whole race, whether pure black or adulterated. After the New Opera House was built, the manager of the old Orleans Theatre, finding his place deserted by many of his former patrons, bethought himself of an expedient to replenish his empty coffers. He made it known that a whole tier of boxes would be reserved for the use of colored families. There were indignant protests from certain *habitués*, but those boxes were filled every night during the season, and the manager was saved from ruin.

This social ostracism, while it must have awakened bitter feelings of humiliation in many a heart, had on the whole one beneficial effect. Debarrred from sharing the social pleasures of the whites, yet unwilling to mingle with the disreputable and vulgar class of their own race, the respectable colored people were drawn more closely together. They formed a distinct community, a society as exclusive as any, and remarkable above all for its morality. They intermarried in their own set, and their homes were happy. A scandal was of rare occurence among them. Their children were well brought up. Their daughters were taught the accomplishments which help to make home pleasant: many were excellent musicians. The curse of drunkenness seldom blighted the lives of their young men, and statistics showed that no class figured so insignificantly on the records of crime. This is no highly-colored fancy sketch, but a mere statement of curious facts. It is the history of a social problem without precedent or parallel. Given a superior race holding an inferior one in bondage, and, between the two, a class deriving its origin from both, yet hated and envied by the one and scorned though kindly treated by the other to whose level it vainly aspires, this class of social pariahs seems predestined to fall into evil ways from sheer despair. In this case, education, while it made the free colored people feel more acutely, perhaps, their humiliation, proved to be their salvation. It taught them self-respect and a dignity in misfortune which is worthy of all praise. Accepting frankly a condition of things to which they saw no issue, they were neither despondent nor cringing, but conducted themselves so as to secure the good will of their neighbors and their own happiness. They never were conspirators or agitators. Could they have foreseen that through a bloody war, in which they took no part, those political and civil rights would come which seemed so far beyond their reach, it is a question whether they would have been satisfied; for emancipation would sweep away the line so long maintained between them and the most ignorant and debased of their race, but it could not obliterate the color-line. No laws could make them white, and thus remove the only real obstacle that ever stood in their way while they were known as F.M.C.'s.

A singular case of the sudden transformation of a F.M.C. into a white man did occur once. The parties concerned were two brothers of the name of Thomas: their history savors so much of romance that, were not many still living who knew the circumstances, we should hesitate to tell it. They were twin brothers, past middle age, and both were engaged in the brokerage business. They had received a common-school education, they possessed moderate means, and were generally respected for their honesty. To one of these brothers, especially, an intelligent and very sensitive man, the opprobrious «F.M.C.» was galling in the extreme. «Everybody knows I am a colored man,» George Thomas would say: «why should the fact be proclaimed every time my name has to appear in a legal document?» One day, meeting a gentleman with whom he had a friendly acquaintance, George Thomas ran up to him with outstretched hands, crying, «Congratulate me! No more shame for me. I am a white man!» The poor fellow's mother had died quite recently, and the first thought of the gentleman thus addressed was that grief had upset George's mind; but the latter proceeded volubly to tell his strange story, which turned out to be quite true. It was, in substance, this. Among the defenders of Cap Français who lost their lives when that town was attacked by the blacks in the San Domingo insurrection was a planter of the name of Thomas. His grief-stricken widow, accompanied by a faithful mulatto woman,—the nurse of her little George,—tried, like many of the terrified families, to seek refuge on one of the vessels in the harbor. She was drowned in making the attempt. The nurse, with her nursling and her own babe, reached the vessel, however, and was carried to New Orleans. In the confusion which prevailed on board the overcrowded brig, no one had paid attention to the poor woman or asked her any questions. She was ignorant, a stranger, not knowing to whom she should apply for help or advice. She took counsel from her own heart. Her dear «missis» was dead; there was no one to care for the little orphan; she would be a mother to him. Alone and unaided, the good woman entered upon her self-imposed task, and by dint of untiring industry succeeded in bringing up her two boys. She sent them to school as soon as they were old enough, and even managed to save a little capital to set them up in business. A secret instinct told her that she should endeavor to fit George for the station to which his birth entitled him; yet a stronger feeling made her conceal his true origin from him. He had taken his first nourishment at her breast; she had lavished as much care and love on him as on her own little Pierre, and had been repaid by his filial love: why should she tell him he was white? If he knew this, perhaps he would go away, leave her, despise her! No, she must not tell him! The boys grew to be gray-headed men, she, a decrepit old woman, and still she kept her secret. But on her death-bed she felt a strange misgiving. What if through her great love for him she had done George a grievous wrong? She sent for the two men and told them the truth; she gave George the proofs she had jealously concealed through these many years,—the portfolio containing her dead mistress's papers, to wit, her marriage certificate, the certificate of birth and baptism of little George, and sundry other family papers. The dying woman craved the forgiveness of the foster-son she had loved too well. It was freely granted, and no word of reproach embittered her last hours. «I have suffered humiliation for fifty years,» said Thomas, in conclusion, «but poor woman, she was a mother to me, and she did it all for the best.» The nurse's dying declaration had been taken by a notary public, and George Thomas had the satisfaction of seeing his name stricken from the list of F.M.C.'s.

The French origin of the Louisianian manifests itself in his clinging love for the place of his birth. He is seldom happy away from home. The characteristic restlessness which leads the citizens of other States to carry their household goods from one end of the Union to the other is unknown to the Louisianian. This love of home, praiseworthy but not the less remarkable under the circumstances, was strongly developed in the free colored people of New Orleans. Some there were, true gentlemen in their manners and principles, who had received a first-class college education in Europe and were wealthy enough to have continued to live abroad: yet they returned voluntarily to occupy the humiliating position of F.M.C.'s in their native city. *«Que voulez-vous? C'est mon pays!»* they would say, with the characteristic French shrug, but also with a sigh that told more than words could express. Nor should we think that the more intelligent class of citizens did not feel sympathy for these men; but *que voulez-vous?* Some time before the war, the Haytian government invited the emigration of colored people from the United States. The people of Hayti, outside of the principal towns, were fast relapsing into the savage state, and it was hoped that the introduction, in large numbers, of American colored men brought up in habits of order and industry would have a civilizing influence on the Haytians. Emigration from Louisiana was particularly desired, on account of the similarity of language, the Creole *patois* being very much like that of Hayti. The Haytian agent for Louisiana was a young negro, born and raised in New Orleans and favorably known to some members of the press. His heart was set on the success of his mission, and he wished it to be well understood by the public at large as well as by the colored people. The New Orleans *Picayune* discussed the question forcibly in a series of articles. It held that the departure, in any large number, of such industrious, law-abiding citizens as the class to which this appeal was made would, no doubt, prove a serious loss to the city of New Orleans, yet common justice demanded that no obstacle should be thrown in the way of these men, whose position in the community was an anomaly with no hope or prospect of a change. If they chose to exchange a condition of painful inferiority in their native land for one in which they would enjoy all the privileges of equality while helping in a work of civilization which had for its object the elevation of their own race, they should be encouraged, and every just-minded man should bid them God-speed with genuine sympathy. A curious fact in connection with these articles is that they were from the pen of a descendant of San Domingo planters, whose ancestors were massacred by the blacks. After considerable delay, the agent succeeded in recruiting some thirty emigrants, mostly of the poorer and less desirable class. Before another year had elapsed, the few who had started with means returned, impoverished; they had given up everything in order to get back to the land of their birth.

At the outbreak of our civil war the wealthy colored men of New Orleans organized two battalions of five hundred men, splendidly armed and equipped on the model of the French *Chasseurs d'Afrique*. They chose two white commanders, Colonels Labatut and Ogden, one of French and the other of Anglo-Saxon descent, both sons of distinguished veterans of the war of 1814-15. The governor accepted their services; but, the Confederacy having been organized in the mean time, the State could not have troops of her own, and the Confederate government objected to enrolling colored soldiers. Whether these men were moved by a purely patriotic impulse, or hoped to raise themselves nearer to the level of their white fellow-townsmen by serving honorably the common cause, their mortification at being so summarily rejected must have been bitter, and the policy of the Confederate government was questionable.

The war levelled the old barriers, and this interesting class of the F.M.C.'s lost their individuality. They were merged into the great mass of «colored citizens.» How did these men accept the stupendous change, and what part did they play in the work of reconstruction? Did the sense of the long humiliation they had borne so patiently make them turn suddenly against their white neighbors? Or, satisfied with the advantages gained, did they feel that community of interests is a bond that even the remembrance of past grievances cannot weaken? They did not turn demagogues and seek to control the ignorant mass of freedmen for their own selfish ends, for their familiar names do not appear in the list of would-be politicians and partisan leaders of the reconstruction era. It is said that many of them emigrated to Europe years ago, forsaking their beloved city, singularly enough, at the very time a power was placed in their hands which might have been used for the greater good of all. And yet their education, morality, and law-abiding habits fitted these men eminently to be the guides of their race in Louisiana through the difficult passage from abject slavery to unlimited freedom.

What might have been their influence on the race at large is more difficult to say. The same peculiarities of language, creed, manners, and customs which combine to make the Louisiana Creole different from other Americans distinguished them from the other colored people of the United States. But to speculate on past possibilities were idle: the F.M.C.'s are a lost race whose history is not written. That history scarcely presents events stirring enough to tempt the historian or attract the reader, yet it affords a study which might interest the philosopher and would make him grow thoughtful as he grappled with one of the most curious unsolved problems of a peculiar phase of modern civilization.

THE FREE PEOPLE OF COLOR IN LOUISIANA AND ST. DOMINGUE: A COMPARATIVE PORTRAIT OF TWO THREE-CASTE SLAVE SOCIETIES

By Laura Foner

Recently historians of slavery in the Americas have been engaged in a heated debate over the widely differing racial patterns that emerged in the slave societies of this hemisphere. Despite their often bitter disagreements over the origins of these patterns, most agree that it was the treatment and position of the exslave in these societies which distinguished one racial pattern from another.

In Portuguese and Spanish America the racial and social pattern allowed the exslave to gain acceptance in free society and even to move from a lower to a higher social level through economic advancement. Such a change in social status was possible even in a system of racial ranking that placed whites on top and blacks on the bottom, because of the absence of a strict color line. Not only did these slave societies have many racial categories between black and white, but also a man's status in society was not as much defined by membership in one of these racial groups as by his economic success.

In the British and French West Indies the racial lines were more sharply defined, and the same kind of racial mobility did not exist. Yet there the exslave could fit into a three-caste pattern which allowed a substantial group of free mixed bloods with many privileges to exist as an intermediate caste between whites and blacks.

Although in all these societies the enslavement of an easily distinguishable racial grouping produced certain racial distinctions between white and colored free men, in the United States these distinctions took on a form unique in the hemisphere. There all Negroes – free and slave – were cut off from the rest of society and confined to a distinctly separate and lower caste. This was accomplished both by increasing restrictions on manumission, which confined the Negro as much as possible to a slave status, and by a whole series of legal and social restrictions which rigidly excluded the free Negro from white society. Almost everywhere in the United States even the smallest amount of Negro blood was enough to make a man a Negro and therefore a member of a subordinate caste.

Unsuspecting travelers in the antebellum South were therefore startled to find that the deep South state of Louisiana had a large and privileged free colored community, not unlike the free colored communities of many West Indian islands. Louisiana's free colored community was not only the biggest in the deep South,[1] but its members had a social, economic, and legal position far superior to that of free Negroes in most other areas of the South, even those in which the free Negro population was substantial.[2] Travelers were struck by the unusual degree of wealth, education, and social standing of the Louisiana free Negro.

They noted «Negroes in purple and fine linen,» «pretty and accomplished young women,» and «opulent, intelligent colored planters.»[3] It was not only this elegant elite which distinguished the free colored population, as only a minority belonged to it, for although they did not live in luxury the typical members of the free colored community nevertheless generally found employment at some skilled occupation. In 1860 only one-tenth of the free colored population of New Orleans were classified as common laborers. In fact the free Negroes had a near monopoly of certain trades, including those of mechanic, carpenter, shoemaker, barber, and tailor.[4]

Although other Southern cities had their free colored mechanics and skilled craftsmen, as Phillips says, «wherever they dwelt, they lived somewhat precariously upon the sufferance of the whites, and in more or less palpable danger of losing their liberty.»[5] By contrast in Louisiana the freedom and privileges of the free colored population were not only accepted but also protected.

Although the difference has been noted by almost all historians of American slavery and the South,[6] there have been few attempts to explain why Louisiana's social and racial pattern was a three-caste system or to define the role of the free colored population within that system. This article analyzes how a three-caste slave society developed and operated in antebellum Louisiana; it compares the three-caste system which existed within the context of North American slavery both with the rest of the United States South and with the three-caste system in the French colony of St. Domingue.

In 1850 the mulattoes and others of mixed blood formed about eighty percent of Louisiana's total free Negro population.[7] Some of them came from stable families which had been free for generations.[8] But almost all had their origins in some extramarital union (by this time perhaps quite far removed) between a white man and a black woman. The beginnings of this long-established practice dated back to the early eighteenth century when Louisiana was first being settled by the French. The small group of early settlers consisted mostly of those «in the pay of . . . the King» and especially garrison soldiers.[9] Among the hardships faced by these men in their pioneering work of founding a colony was a scarcity of women. They solved the problem, according to the French Governor Bienville, by running «in the woods after Indian girls.»[10]

An early census of the population shows that in 1722 the scarcity of women persisted, but the complexion of the Louisiana colony had changed. The need for a labor force, it was soon found, could not be satisfactorily met by enslaving the Indians and soon a demand was raised for Negro slaves.[11] As early as 1706 Bienville had been proposing an exchange of three Indians from Louisiana for every two Negroes from the West Indies.[12] By 1722 the number of Negro slaves was almost as large as the total number of whites.[13]

As the Negro population grew, it also began to lighten in color. An explanation for this growth of a mulatto population may be found not only in the high ratio of men to women, which had sent the French chasing off into the woods, but also in the type of frontier society which was «sans religion, sans justice, sans ordre, et sans police.»[14] The inhabitants consisted largely of soldiers, trappers, prostitutes, convicts, Indians, Negroes, and a few French officials. The last French governor of the colony, D'Abbadie, describes the conduct of this varied group as «a chaos of iniquity and discord.»[15]

In this society «illicit» relationships between the races were no disgrace. In fact they became an accepted social practice. Court records show that men often provided an account of where they had been at a given time by stating that they had been «sleeping with a negress.»[16] The children of these unions were frequently recognized by the natural father, who cared for their upbringing and education. Very often they freed their mulatto children as well as the mother. Vincent le Porche freed his daughter Louise, declaring in his statement to the Superior Council that she was «not a slave but should enjoy complete liberty, being the daughter of a Frenchman.»[17]

There were few legal obstacles to such manumissions. The Louisiana Code Noir[18] permitted any master over twenty-five years of age to manumit his slaves either by last will and testament or by deed while alive, subject to official approval by the Superior Council.[19] The Code also provided for the manumission of a child born of a free Negro father and slave mother, if the father married the mother, and of slaves who had performed some special service for the colony. It also provided for the automatic emancipation of a slave serving as a tutor to his master's children.[20] Except for prohibitions on harboring fugitive slaves and receiving donations from whites, the freedman or woman was guaranteed the same rights as white people.[21] With law and social custom offering no real barriers a free colored population made its appearance in the colony and continued to grow. Although the Code Noir prohibited concubinage of whites and slaves, enforcement would have been at best difficult. (As Winthrop Jordan says about the same practice in the West Indies, one might as well have legislated against the sugar cane!)

When the Spanish took control of the colony in 1769, they continued a liberal policy toward manumission and even provided a number of additional ways for slaves to gain their freedom. By far the most important of these was self-purchase. A slave was allowed to buy his own freedom, usually with money earned by extra work for his master or someone else. If the master was unwilling to set a price or if the price was thought to be unfair, the slave could petition the Court to appoint a disinterested party to determine a fair value.[22] The free Negro population grew from 165 in 1769 to 1,175 by 1785.[23]

Miscegenation also continued unabated. Travelers in the colony frequently remarked on the amount of interracial cohabitation existing on all levels of society. Available white women were still scarce, and they are described by one observer as «impenetrably dull.» On the other hand this same traveler found the free colored women very well bred, not wanting in «discernment, penetration and finesse, and . . . superior to many white girls of the lower classes of society.»[24] The Creole planters too had the «colonial foible: their offspring, whom their color betrays, are all around them.»[25] One colonial bishop complains that Spanish military officers «and a good many inhabitants live almost publicly with colored concubines,» and they did not even «blush» when they carried their illegitimate children «to be recorded in the registries as their natural children.»[26] These children often took their father's name[27] and were sometimes left large fortunes.[28]

These interracial unions became such accepted social practice that they developed into a well-established institution called *plaçage*. *Plaçage* was a system of extramarital unions (marriages between whites and Negroes was illegal), sometimes lasting for life, contracted between white men and colored women. The white man provided financial support for his colored *placée* according to an agreement contracted with the girl's parents. He could maintain his colored family on one side of town while at the same time continuing his life in white society in every respect, including if he desired, marriage with a white woman.[29]

The same conditions that contributed to the growth of a free colored population in Louisiana's slave society were also present in the early slave society of French St. Domingue. There too frontier conditions, scarcity of white women, a growing black population, and ease of manumission led to the rise of a large free colored community.

The early white population consisted largely of adventurers, criminals, debtors, and other types not particularly wanted back home.[30] The royal officials in St. Domingue complain: «We are sent from France only poor ragged wretches who are killed off or incapacitated by disease, or other disreputable characters: those ruined by age or debauchery, prisoners, and children whose parents send them away for fear that their evil inclinations will eventually lead to the scaffold.»[31] The women were reputed to have «bodies as corrupt as their manners, and serve only to infest the colony . . .»[32] Says another royal official, «you can not imagine a more licentious country.»[33] One French commissioner puts the blame for this demoralization on «the too intimate intercourse of the whites and blacks, the criminal intercourse that most of the masters have with their women slaves.»[34]

This practice had been common on the island from the early seventeenth century when the French buccaneers had solved their woman problem by stealing slaves from the Spanish or English.[35] It spread as the number of slaves imported to the island reached into the thousands every year.[36] In 1725 the Intendant warned that if they were not careful the French would soon become like their Spanish neighbors of whom three-fourths were already of mixed blood.[37]

Unlike Louisiana the «intimacy» between blacks and whites in St. Domingue was not all extralegal. In 1688 M. de Cussy writes that in four months there had been twenty marriages between whites and Negro or mulatto women.[38] De Vassière cites two cases of white men having made their fortunes through marriages to wealthy Negresses,[39] and Hilliard d'Auberteuil names «cupidity» as the motive prompting more than three hundred interracial marriages.[40]

But the creation of a free colored population resulted mainly, as in Louisiana, from the manumission of mulatto slave children. Early custom had held that all mulattoes were free up to the age of twenty-four.[41] Later the Code Noir, as part of an attempt to discourage concubinage between masters and slaves, decreed that only if the master legally married her could the slave mother and the colored offspring be freed. If not the slave was to be confiscated.[42] Otherwise manumissions by all masters over twenty-one were unrestricted.[43]

All attempts to restrict concubinage, however, were doomed to failure. Miscegenation continued despite the prohibitions and so did the custom of freeing the children of these unions. By 1719 not less than five percent of the population consisted of free coloreds.[44] Later when frontier conditions no longer prevailed, the white planters continued their unions with slaves and colored mistresses. Here as in Louisiana they formed stable extramarital unions of *plaçage*.

In the bulk of the United States South such goings-on would have been considered shameful and shocking, for a very different atmosphere surrounded the question of «racial amalgamation.» Although early colonial America was also a frontier society,[45] some of its earliest legislation after the first importation of Africans was specifically designed to prevent interracial marriages and sexual union.[46]

Despite opposition to miscegenation mulatto children did appear from time to time on Southern plantations. For as Frank Tannenbaum puts it, «the process of miscegenation was part of the system of slavery, and not just of Brazilian slavery . . . The dynamics of race contact and sex interest were stronger than prejudice, theory, law or belief . . . This same mingling of the races and classes occurred in the United States . . . in spite of law, doctrine or belief. Every traveler in the South before the Civil War comments on the widespread miscegenation.»[47]

A mulatto child, although not openly recognized, could still certainly be given favored treatment and a special position on the plantation. But to free him, in most of the United States South, involved overcoming very stiff legal barriers to manumission and then condemning him as a freedman to life as a kind of outcast. Because of the severe restrictions on manumission, only in a few urban centers were there free colored communities of any size. And very few were anything like New Orleans, where the free colored community had its own schools, churches, social and cultural life, and where a freedman could live with a relatively large degree of freedom and range of opportunities.

This striking difference in the initial growth and position of free colored populations in Haiti and Louisiana on the one hand and the rest of the United States South on the other can perhaps be explained by differences in the cultural backgrounds of the colonists. In his discussion of the relationship between colonists' different cultural backgrounds and the slave systems and racial attitudes they developed, Tannenbaum suggests a direct correlation between these cultural backgrounds and the ease and frequency of manumission and willingness to accept Negroes as freemen and members of free society. Although his comparison is drawn largely between the Portuguese and Spanish slave systems and those of the Anglo-Saxons, he points out that the French were similar to the Iberians in their religious traditions and institutions, which emphasized the moral personality of the slave.[48] The differing Anglo-Saxon and Latin attitudes toward race mixing may also in part arise from the difference between Protestant and Catholic attitudes toward sin and sexual contact.[49] If an illicit union is regarded with guilt and shame, the offspring would be more likely to be cast aside than publicly acknowledged.

However, as critics have pointed out, the effect of cultural differences operates within certain limits[50] – something Tannenbaum himself recognizes. In a comparison of racial patterns in the British West Indies and the United States, Winthrop Jordan shows that two societies with the *same* cultural heritage developed completely different attitudes toward interracial sex and those of mixed blood. In the British as in the French West Indies, white men openly kept colored mistresses and freed their mulatto children, who were accorded many privileges of whites. Jordan ascribes this West Indian practice to such factors as the ratio of men to women and of Negroes to whites in the total population. Where both were high, as on the island of Jamaica (or in St. Domingue, as we have seen), miscegenation was considered more acceptable and there was a greater willingness to accept the consequences of these unions. Jordan also points out that in the British West Indies, as in St. Domingue, the bulk of the whites wanted only to make money and leave quickly. By contrast in the United States most of the white residents looked on their new home as a place to settle permanently. Further, the population in the United States was predominantly white,[51] with large numbers of white women and a greater importance given to marriage and stable family life.[52]

These demographic and cultural factors doubtless influenced the attitudes of the white colonists toward the growth of free Negro populations in St. Domingue, Louisiana, and the rest of the American South. But the differences in these attitudes and in the positions free Negroes were to attain in these slave societies also arose from the political, military, and economic needs of these societies.

In both Louisiana and Haiti the free people of color performed certain essential services in the slave system for which no other group was available. And in both colonies, especially in times of political division among the whites and rebelliousness among the slaves, the ruling whites were forced to depend on the free people of color for support. In Louisiana because of the small size of the white population, free Negro soldiers were considered so important that they were used in the military defense of the colony from the very outset. After the Natchez massacre of 1729 it was suggested several times that a regular company of free Negroes be formed «for instant call against the Indians» in case of attack.[53]

When the Spanish took over the colony from the French, they continued this policy of arming the free colored men. But the military problems of the Spanish authorities were far more serious than just defending the colony from outside attack. The new government faced a hostile white population which remained loyal to France and was reported to be continually plotting against their new rulers. The plots often included plans to encourage slave uprisings or to enlist the aid of free Negroes.[54] Since the Spanish administration could not depend on the loyalty of most of the white people, they turned to the free colored and «went so far as to exact a declaration in the affirmative [of loyalty to the new government] from two militia companies of men of color in New Orleans, which were composed of all the mechanics whom that city possessed.»[55] On the whole the free coloreds kept their pledge of loyalty. On several occasions they revealed information about conspiracies among the French.[56] Their militia companies joined the regular standing army in fighting Indians and the British. During peacetime their troops served as slavecatchers[57] and performed such emergency tasks as mending the levee.

The free people of color provided other services in colonial Louisiana. They were overseers for many white planters[58] and in New Orleans and other towns they were the tradesmen, the mechanics, and the owners of small businesses.[59] Some acquired substantial amounts of property and wealth.[60] Some became plantation owners and were as successful as Jean Baptiste Bienville, a free Negro planter whose estate was valued at almost 14,000 pesos in 1802.[61] In return for these achievements, the free coloreds were given the same legal rights and privileges as whites. They were free to bring civil actions against whites and often did. They were guaranteed equal protection of property rights and full rights to make contracts and engage in all business transactions.[62] And the government insured that these rights were protected.[63] Thus the free people of color were able to develop a privileged position in Louisiana Negro society. As late as 1856 the Louisiana Supreme Court was to affirm that «in the eyes of Louisiana law there is . . . all the difference between a free man of color and a slave that there is between a white man and a slave.»[64] And since the government needed the support of the free coloreds to bolster its tenuous control, it adopted a policy of protecting this privileged position.

Yet although the government and the ruling whites protected the distinction between a free man of color and a slave, they took equal if not greater care to preserve the distinction between themselves and a free man of color. Free Negroes were forbidden to sit next to whites in theaters or public vehicles. They were subject to reenslavement for certain crimes[65] and required to show deference to their former masters.[66] They were also periodically subjected to other humiliating social distinctions such as a government ordinance in 1788 which made it illegal for any free woman of color to «walk abroad in silks, jewels or plumes» and which required that they all had to cover their hair with a kerchief.[67] These racial distinctions served a particular function, part of which was an ideological justification for slavery. But the color line also served to preserve a strict social hierarchy with whites on top and the free coloreds securely «in their place,» midway between the ruling whites and the slaves.

In St. Domingue the free people of color developed a similar position. Here too the ruling whites depended on them for certain vital services. With a free population of 15,836 (half of which was free coloreds) and a slave population of 164,859 in 1753,[68] the whites needed all the help they could get to patrol the hostile labor force which surrounded them. The precarious internal security of the island and the whites' need for allies were heightened by a constant threat of attack from a rival commercial power. Thus the free men of color were used in the militia and in the *maréchaussée*, a mounted police organization which captured runaway slaves, patrolled the highways, and fought maroon colonies. And although their early guarantee of «all rights and privileges of French citizens»[69] were gradually modified by a number of restrictions, their numbers and economic power continued to grow. Since their economic privileges to acquire and dispose of property and engage in business transactions were never touched,[70] they continued to acquire substantial amounts of wealth as master-artisans and planters, sometimes becoming the creditors of resident whites.

Further, as in Louisiana the free people of color of St. Domingue became a kind of buffer group in a struggle within a divided ruling class. In St. Domingue the conflict centered around whether the locus of political control should reside with the representatives of the royal government sent from Paris or with the resident planters. The struggle became acute in the mid-eighteenth century. A dramatic increase in the island's prosperity at that time prompted the Crown to abandon its rather loose supervision of the island and attempt to replace the local civil and military authorities (controlled by the resident planters) by its own administrative network.

Throughout this struggle and especially in the 1760s when the white colonists threatened insurrection after the Crown suppressed the colonial militia,[71] the royal government turned to the free people of color. Like the Spanish government in Louisiana the French Crown looked to the free coloreds for support against the white colonists. They armed and organized them into special companies and promised them reforms to improve their conditions. Later when resistance among the whites had been temporarily halted, the special free colored companies were disbanded and reorganized into militia units, which served under white officers, in contrast to the past when they had always been commanded by officers of their own color.[72]

The policy of the French government toward the free people of color was flexible and had a very definite purpose. At times the free people of color were protected and granted special privileges. At other times they were degraded with discriminatory regulations. Both of these thrusts were part of the government's general purpose of maintaining strict divisions among the different groups in the colony so that no one group would be strong enough to challenge French colonial rule. According to Julien Raimond, the wealthy mulatto who served as the free colored spokesman during the French Revolution, they followed the «maxim of government,» the simple and long-tested principle of divide and rule.[73] The discriminatory regulations obviously served to keep the free people of color apart from the whites. One set of royal instructions sent to the governor of St. Domingue in 1766 predicts that if «the whites were to end up uniting with the free coloreds, the colony could easily withdraw from the King's authority.»[74] But the government was also careful to protect those privileges which isolated the free colored from the slaves to prevent what to them *and* the white colonists was an even more threatening combination. Thus in both Louisiana and Haiti a special position for the free people of color was created, in part because they performed certain vital economic and military services for the slave systems. This position was maintained and strengthened by the colonial governments' need for allies.

In the United States, as Marvin Harris points out, these same services could be performed by a large group of «middle class» whites.[75] Despite a large influx of Negro slaves and the growth of the plantation system, the antebellum South remained a largely white society, about three-quarters of which was made up of non-planters. After the American Revolution political power was no longer in the hands of a colonial government but in the hands of the planters themselves. And they had no need of an intermediate caste of free coloreds to help them maintain control. Rather they needed to unite all the whites – planters and nonplanters (all of whom had the vote) – in continued adherence to their control and to the slave system. «The slave in the South came less and less frequently to be manumitted, . . . freedmen were deprived of effective citizenship and . . . mulattoes were forced back into the Negro group, . . .»[76] because there was no need for them in order for the system to function and because that crossclass unity of Southern whites was achieved by the most rigid color line: black (read all shades up to «passing») is bad and should be slave; white is good and should be free. In this system free Negroes were seen as a threat to «the harmony and compactness of Southern society»[77] and «the greatest and most deplorable evil.»[78]

In Louisiana and especially St. Domingue, where whites were outnumbered by black slaves, the existence of a separate group of free coloreds was essential, not only for providing certain needed services but in helping to control the slave population. Their intermediate privileged position conveniently divorced them from the slave class from which they had come and kept them from challenging the class structure from which they benefitted. But their position also contained tensions and generated the fear that too many privileges for the free coloreds would produce a challenge to the racial hierarchy of white dominance and give slaves ideas which might be disastrous for the stability of the slave system. Thus while the color line in a three-caste society was more flexible than in a two-caste slave society and included the attitude «some white is better than no white,» it nevertheless strictly preserved the principle «white is best.» Although free people of color shared the same class position of many whites as planters, they were socially excluded from membership in that class and were forced to form a separate and subordinate caste, a «middle estate, between the whites and the slaves, who, although enjoying the privileges of freedom, only [did] so with modifications.»[79]

In such a system of class coercion and racial hierarchy the free people of color remained a constant source of tension.[80] These underlying tensions became more acute when the system was threatened or when important changes in the economy or social structure produced strains. One such period of strain took place in Louisiana when it was transferred to the United States, which purchased the territory from the French in 1803. At that time the free people of color became a central concern for the incoming American administration. The Americans were generally nervous about taking over a territory whose population had seen frequent changes of government, with loyalties torn between France, Spain, and the United States. And they were especially nervous about the large slave population and the existence of a large, wealthy, *armed* free colored community. They found «painful and perplexing . . . the formidable aspect of the armed Blacks and Mulattoes [*sic*] officered and organized.»[81] Immediately before the transfer, notes one observer, since the free people of color represented such a large class in the population and were used to the treatment of the Spanish government which had «accorded them rights in common with other subjects,» it was «worth the consideration of the government they be made good citizens or formidable abettors of the black people [*sic*] . . . if they should ever become troublesome.»[82]

The new American governor tried to win their loyalty and convince them not to make any trouble for the new government. When a mass meeting was called for the free colored people of New Orleans to «consult together as to *their* rights» (it was called after they had been excluded from a general public assembly), Governor Claiborne convinced leaders of the free colored community not to hold the meeting «or publicly manifest any disquietude.»[83] When whites demanded that the author of the call for the meeting be punished, Claiborne refused saying it was better to keep the affair as quiet as possible «in a country where the Negro population was so great.» The governor feared that any harm done to the author might lead to retributions by the free coloreds and a repetition of the much feared slave revolt which by then had destroyed slavery in St. Domingue.[84] A large slave revolt in Louisiana a few years later in St. Charles and St. John the Baptist parishes, involving about four or five hundred slaves, increased the general tension.[85]

The concern about the free people of color was heightened in this period by the sudden influx of a large number of new free colored residents, refugees from St. Domingue, and the rapid growth of the slave population at this same time as a result of the spread of the plantation system. In less than ten years the influx of refugees more than doubled Louisiana's free colored population.[86] And with the boom in Louisiana sugar and cotton production the slave population increased from 34,000 in 1810 to 69,064 in 1820 and to 109,558 in 1830.[87]

The new American regime's uneasiness about the free coloreds was expressed in a series of new restrictions. Repeated attempts were made to restrict the immigration of the free coloreds from the West Indies.[88] The first session of the territorial legislature declared that free Negroes could not insult or strike a white, or presume «to conceive of themselves of equal to whites.»[89] New restrictions were put on the formerly unrestricted right of a master to free his slaves[90] and on admission of free Negroes into the territory.[91] The death penalty was established for all free people of color and slaves (but not whites) for arson, poisoning a white person, or rape of a white woman or child,[92] and free men of color were prohibited from owning white servants.[93]

But in spite of these early restrictions, which were followed by much harsher ones in later years, the free people of color kept on growing in numbers, wealth, and property. And despite the tensions and resulting pressures from the new administration and the Anglo-Saxon immigrants, their protected position in Louisiana slave society was also maintained. How can this be explained?

A sizable free colored community had long been a well-established social fact in Louisiana and its members shared the language, customs, and cultural traditions of the bulk of the white population. Many of the old residents felt a greater affinity with these free coloreds than with the new immigrants from the Southeast, the North, Germany, and Ireland. Further, at the very time of the American takeover this already important group had been doubled in size and wealth by the addition of free people of color from the French West Indies. This meant that although the spread of the plantation system brought growing limitations on manumission, the free coloreds were already numerous enough to be able to continue to grow substantially through natural increase alone without having to depend upon manumission.

Even under the new regime they continued to perform important functions for the slave system. Their continued strategic importance is illustrated by the government's attitude toward them during the War of 1812. Claiborne urged General Jackson to use a battalion of free men of color, saying: «These men, sir, for the most part, sustain good characters. Many of them have extensive connections and much property to defend and all seem attached to arms. The mode of acting toward them at the present crisis is an inquiry of importance. If we give them not our confidence, the enemy will be encouraged to intrigue and corrupt them.»[94] And the development of New Orleans at this time into one of the most important port cities in the United States meant that the free colored community was actually able to strengthen its position.[95] The growth of the large plantations and the Mississippi River trade, which linked the South and the Midwest, brought cotton, sugar, pork, and hundreds of other commodities to Crescent City. Such a great commercial metropolis, third largest in the antebellum South,[96] needed an urban middle class to work at the skilled trades, to run the hundreds of retail shops, and to perform commercial transactions. The free people of color filled this basic need,[97] and since the system still needed them, their established position in society remained more or less secure even at a time of tremendous strains and changes within Louisiana slave society.[98] But the tension remained. For example, in the wake of the reaction to the Nat Turner insurrection in 1830 new moves were made to restrict manumission and to prevent the return of any free Negro who left the state.[99]

In St. Domingue these tensions were much closer to the surface and there were mounting pressures against the free colored population throughout the eighteenth century. Free Negroes were prohibited from practicing the professions of doctor, druggist, or surgeon,[100] leaving the colony without permission,[101] and (except for officers in the militia or the *maréchaussée*) carrying arms or purchasing ammunition.[102] Restrictions of this sort, however, were not very effective in either St. Domingue or Louisiana. In Louisiana the native free colored population was usually exempted from restrictive legislation and was very often defended by the old Creole residents.[103]

In St. Domingue the free coloreds continued to have an impressive economic position. Amounting to about half of the free population, the free coloreds owned, according to some sources, one-third of all the land and one-fourth of all the slaves.[104] In one Southern parish, Jérémie, they owned almost all the land. With the expansion of coffee production in the frontier areas around 1760, thousands of free colored people who owned land there were able to profit and expand their small estates into plantations. In the plains they also gained in importance, not so much as sugar planters but as overseers on absentee sugar, coffee, or indigo plantations. It became customary for a white planter to educate his mulatto children in France and then trust them with the running of the estate when they returned to the island. As in Louisiana the free coloreds also worked as carpenters, bookkeepers, housekeepers, and in other skilled trades.[105]

In Louisiana the free people of color monopolized such professions as the building trades and catering and professional personal services such as barbering and tailoring.[106] In addition there were Negro stockholders in the powerful Citizen's Bank[107] and a few prosperous businessmen and manufacturers. The free Negroes also controlled the cigar industry, and some owned sizable factories.[108] And although not nearly as numerous as in St. Domingue, several free colored planters existed in Louisiana.[109] The free colored communities continued to have their own independent social and cultural institutions with their own leaders, educators, musicians, dramatists, artists, and writers. In Louisiana they had their own community-supported schools.[110]

What would happen to the position of the free people of color at a time of fundamental crisis in the slave system? Such crises existed in the last decade before the French Revolution in St. Domingue and also in the last decade before the Civil War in Louisiana. Then the pressures which had always existed against free coloreds turned into real assaults.

In St. Domingue the tremendous growth of the slave population in the late eighteenth century heightened the need the white population felt to maintain a constant subordination of the entire colored population which so greatly outnumbered the white.[111] And there was an increasing fear that the growing «spirit of liberty, independence, and equality» would spread, «destroying the ties of discipline and subordination and thus preparing a revolution of which the neighboring colonies already furnish an example and which only the greatest vigilance will be able to prevent.»[112] In Louisiana half a century later growing free Negro and slave populations were linked as the sectional controversy intensified, and free Negroes were seen as a greater and greater threat.

Contributing to the campaign against them was the jealousy and race prejudice attributed to the poor whites by both Desdunes in Louisiana and Raimond in St. Domingue, two well-known colored Creoles.[113] For these men of low origins and little property or wealth «race prejudice was more important than even the possession of slaves, of which they held few. The distinction between a white man and a man of color was for them fundamental. It was their all.»[114] A new influx of poor whites had come to St. Domingue in the last decade before the French Revolution, drawn by the extraordinary prosperity. When they arrived, they found that almost all of the good land was already taken up – much of it by free colored men.[115] If they tried to find work as artisans in the towns, they also came up against the competition of free men of color. In Louisiana too in the 1840s and 1850s, a large number of immigrants, mostly German and Irish, came to New Orleans looking for work. Although they replaced free Negroes and slaves to a large extent as common laborers, they were unable to do so in most of the skilled trades, which remained the monopoly of free people of color.[116] In both societies this competition made the poor white people a leading force for the suppression of the free coloreds.[117] But the chief reason for the mounting agitation against free Negroes was the desire to mobilize all of white society in defense of the system. Faced with a real crisis, whites felt it essential to achieve the tightest unity while they prepared for a possible confrontation. To do this they fell back on the racism which was part of both their ideological basis for slavery and their three-caste racial pattern.

Discrimination against free people of color increased drastically in both societies. In St. Domingue they were forbidden to go to France,[118] to use the last names of white men,[119] or to use the titles «Sieur» and «Dame» when addressing each other.[120] They were prohibited from dressing like whites, wearing their hair like whites, or wearing any jewels or finery.[121] They could no longer play European games[122] or sit in the same sections of churches and theatres as whites,[123] and they were forbidden to meet, even for weddings, festivals, or dances.[124]

In Louisiana where until the 1850s there had been few legal restrictions other than denial of suffrage and of the benefits of the free school law, the legislature now prohibited nonresident free Negroes from entering the state, made it mandatory for any slave freed in Louisiana to leave the state, and later outlawed manumission altogether.[125] In the same period most of the free Negroes' schools were closed down, and the state legislature prohibited the incorporation of any new religious, charitable, scientific, or literary societies composed of free coloreds and dissolved all such existing associations.[126] Free Negroes were forbidden to operate billiard halls, coffee houses, and liquor stores, or to work as riverboat captains.[127] The parishes and cities added their own restrictions. In New Orleans these ranged from limitations on shooting off firecrackers to the prohibition of *any* assembly of colored people, free or slave.[128] Finally in 1859 the legislature decided to encourage «free people of African descent to select their masters and become slaves for life.»[129]

Considering these attacks, it is amazing to what extent the free people of color were able to retain their established position. Despite the hostility[130] the free coloreds of Louisiana continued to enjoy all rights in civil courts, including the right to testify against whites. They were allowed to remain in the state, and the legislature went only so far as to invite them to choose a master and enslave themselves *if they wanted to.* In St. Domingue too most of their civil rights in the courts were preserved. And in both places economic rights suffered no limitations: there was no tampering with the free coloreds' rights to buy and sell property, to enter into contracts, and to inherit or transmit property by will.[131]

The failure to destroy totally the privileged position of the free coloreds demonstrates the precarious structure of the three-caste system. It was dangerous to allow the race prejudice and fear which became acute in times of extreme tension to go unchecked. The French royal government knew this. It feared that to carry the policy of debasing the free people of color too far might throw them into an alliance with the slaves. In 1774 the governor general and intendant of the Windward Island issued an ordinance requiring the registration of all men of color who claimed to be free; anyone without an authorized title to freedom was to be enslaved. But two years later the King declared the ordinance void since it «tended to put the status of the free men of color in doubt, to bring them closer to the slave population, diminishing that enmity which has always existed between them . . . If our colonies were attacked, this policy might then help our enemies, for these men would want to be revenged for the harms they had suffered.»[132]

In Louisiana resistance to the harsh racial policies came from important elements among the whites themselves, stirring a debate unheard anywhere else in the South. In 1846 a bill was introduced in the state legislature to disqualify free Negroes as court witnesses. A minority of legislators protested that this would be a departure from long-established tradition, insisting that «as long as people of color are permitted to reside among us, the law should tend to elevate, not degrade» them.[133]

The defenders of the free people of color argued along class lines. The free coloreds were a group with property and wealth, they insisted, and far from encouraging slave rebellion, «acted as a restraint upon the slaves.»[134] There was little danger of cooperation between wealthy free Negroes and slaves, since the former «regard the slave with more disdain and antagonism than the white man.»[135] Every attempt at severe legislation in the 1850s was fought by this group of whites. Even those who normally opposed the free coloreds admitted that «they form the great majority of our regular settled masons, brick layers, builders, carpenters, tailors, shoemakers, etc., whose sudden emigration from this community would certainly be attended with some degree of annoyance.»[136] If the whites of St. Domingue had shown the same awareness of the danger of excessive repression, they might have been able to avoid the revolution which destroyed them. «He who fears change more than disaster, how can he forestall the threatening disaster?»[137]

When the white people of St. Domingue were finally confronted by a large-scale slave uprising in 1791, they responded traditionally by retaliating against the free coloreds. They did not realize that the three-caste system had actually succeeded better than they knew as a means of preserving social stability. It had kept the free colored people apart from the slaves and engendered mutual hatreds. The years of economic privileges and racial status had led the free people of color to identify with white society and with the slave system. Time and again the free coloreds offered to cooperate with the whites to put down the slave revolt which threatened that system. In return they asked for equal political rights to which, they insisted, all men of property and education were entitled. But the whites were so blinded by the importance of preserving their own superior position as a race that they refused this offer of class cooperation and clung rigidly to the other thrust of the three-caste system: the color line. In defense of an irrational ideology – racism – the ruling class brought itself down and with it the whole system.[138] In the next few years the slave revolt became a revolution spreading throughout the island. After the bloodiest white repression the free colored people took up arms and fought alongside the slaves, forcing the whites to leave, destroying slavery altogether, and establishing the first Negro republic in the Americas.[139]

In Louisiana the slave system was also

destroyed but not as a result of a slave uprising. When the free coloreds began to organize politically during the Civil War, their problem was not whether to ally with the slaves in seeking to overturn the system or with the whites to preserve it, but rather to unify the whole black and colored population to fight for political gains in the new system being established during the early Reconstruction.[140]

In both societies the three-caste system succeeded in turning potential allies – slaves and free coloreds – into antagonists by granting special privileges to the free coloreds and thereby winning their loyalty to the prevailing order of domination. Although the free people of color were forced to form a separate caste, it was one which mirrored the values of white society and the planter class. Thus they attacked the racial barriers but not the class subordination of the three-caste system, and aspired to full participation in white society rather than its destruction or transformation.

Notes

1. Louisiana's free Negro population outnumbered the combined free Negro populations of Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina by almost 3,000; in 1860 there were 18,647 free Negroes in Louisiana, 9,914 in South Carolina, 3,500 in Georgia, 2,690 in Alabama, and 773 in Mississippi (U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Negro Population in the United States, 1790-1915* [Washington, 1918], p. 57).

2. Larger numbers of free Negroes in the South could be found in areas outside the deep South where the plantation system no longer flourished: the Tidewater region of Virginia and Maryland, and the Piedmont region of North Carolina and Virginia. John H. Russell, *The Free Negro in Virginia: 1619-1865* [Baltimore, 1913], p. 13). In 1860 there were 83,942 free Negroes in Maryland, 30,463 in Virginia, and 30,463 in North Carolina (Bureau of the Census, p. 57).

3. Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States,* (New York, 1904), pp. 246, 269; see also Harriet Martineau, *Society in America*, 2: 326-27; and Joseph Holt Ingraham ed., *The Sunny South* (Philadelphia, 1860), p. 330. This last group included men like Antoine Dubuclet, who in 1860 owned 95 slaves and employed a white overseer on his sugar plantation.

4. Ulrich B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery* (Baton Rouge, 1966), p. 439; Robert C. Reinders, «The Free Negro in the New Orleans Economy, 1850-1860,» *Louisiana History* 6 (1965): 275; Charles E. Gayarré, «Historical Sketch – The Quadroon of Louisiana,» MS in Charles E. Gayarré papers, quoted in Grace King, *New Orleans: The Place and the People* (New York, 1937), p. 345.

5. P. 441.

6. Frederic Bancroft calls Louisiana the «least American of the Southern states» (*Slave Trading in the Old South* [Baltimore, 1931], p. 219).

7. J. B. D. DeBow, *Statistical View of the United States, Being a Compendium of the Seventh Census* (Washington, 1854), p. 83. Throughout the entire antebellum period, Louisiana had the highest ratio of mulattoes to blacks of all the free Negro populations in the Southern states.

8. Franklin E. Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States* (New York, 1948), p. 156.

9. Jay K. Ditchy, «Early Census Tables of Louisiana,» *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* (hereafter abbr. *LHQ*) 13 (1930): 208.

10. Arther W. Calhoun, *A Social History of the American Family* (Cleveland, 1917-18), p. 331, quoted in Frazier, p. 155.

11. Joe Gray Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge, 1963), p. 4.

12. Charles E. Gayarré, *History of Louisiana* (New York, 1866), 1: 242, 254.

13. A census of the troops taken by the inspector general in that year showed that New Orleans and the surrounding areas had a population of 293 men, 140 women, 155 French servants, 51 Indian slaves, and 514 Negro slaves (Ditchy, pp. 214-20).

14. George W. Cable, *The Creoles of Louisiana* (London, 1885), pp. 23-25, quoted in Charles B. Roussève, *The Negro in Louisiana: Aspects of his History and Literature* (New Orleans, 1937), p. 22.

15. Gayarré, 2: 165.

16. «Index to Spanish Judicial Records,» *LHQ* 15 (1932): 688.

17. «Records of the Superior Council,» *LHQ* 14 (1931): 598.

18. The Code, published in 1724 by Bienville, was based, with only minor changes, on the original Code Noir of Louis XIV, which established the basis for all legislation governing slaves and free Negroes in the French colonies.

19. The Superior Council was the chief judicial body of the colony, as well as the place of registry of all deeds and mortgages, slave emancipations, records of vital statistics, etc., during the period of French colonial rule. Its members were appointed by the King, and it had jurisdiction over all civil and criminal cases.

20. *Le Code Noir*, pp. 310-11, cited in Herbert E. Sterkx, «The Free Negro in Ante-Bellum Louisiana» (Ph. D. thesis. Univ. of Alabama, 1954), pp. 5-6.

21. Ibid., p. 365, cited in Sterkx, p. 6.

22. «Index to Spanish Judicial Records,» *LHQ* 22 (1939): 269-271. In one such case, Miguel, a slave, petitioned the court when his mistress refused to set a price for his manumission. The court ruled that she would have to draw up the emancipation papers, setting Miguel's price at 500 pesos. The records also show that slaves were frequently purchased by members of their family who had already gained their own freedom (Ibid., 10 [1927]: 455-61; 6 [1923]: 316; 14 [1931]: 119-23; 24 [1941]: 1279-80; 26 [1943]: 1191-98).

23. The population figures for 1785 are: whites, 9,766; slaves, 15,010 (Caroline M. Burson, *The Stewardship of Don Estaban Miro, 1782-1792* [New Orleans, 1940], p. 105).

24. Berquin Duvallon, *Vue de la colonie espagnole du Mississipi et les provinces de Louisiana et Floride occidentale en L'année 1802* (Paris, 1803), p. 254.

25. Pierre C. de Laussat, *Mémoire sur ma vie pendant les années 1802 et 1803* (1831), p. 159, quoted in Carlyle J. Sitterson, *Sugar Country: The Cane Sugar Industry in the South, 1753-1950* (Lexington, Ky., 1953), p. 69.

26. Gayarré, 3: 408.

27. Rodolphe Desdunes, *Nos hommes et notre histoire* (Montreal, 1911), p. 147.

28. The three illegitimate mulatto children of Andres Juan were all left large sums at his death. During their father's lifetime, they had been educated and lived in his home as members of the family («Index to Spanish Judicial Records,» *LHQ* 24 [1941]: 1260-65).

29. Anna Lee West Stahl, «The Free Negro in Ante-Bellum Louisiana,» *LHQ* 25 (1942): 310-12.

30. Pierre de Vassière, *Saint-Domingue, la société et la vie créoles sous l'ancien régime* (Paris, 1909), pp. 45-55.

31. Letters from DuCasse, 1 Sept. 1648 and 13 Jan. 1699, quoted in ibid., p. 48.

32. Letter from Messrs. de Blenac and Mithon, 10 Aug. 1713, quoted in ibid., p. 78.

33. Ibid., p. 50.

34. This remark was part of a report on the social conditions in the colony made in 1760 (H. P. Davis, *Black Democracy: the Story of Haiti* [New York, 1928], p. 23).

35. Ibid., p. 50.

36. Unlike the Spanish, who gave up their early attempts at plantation colonies in the search for gold and silver, the French, like the English, saw that colonial agriculture held a promise of rapid and unprecedented prosperity. They were right. By the middle of the eighteenth century, St. Domingue was considered the richest European colonial possession.

37. De Vassière, p. 75.

38. Letter, 3 May, quoted in ibid., p. 76.

39. Ibid., p. 65.

40. *Considération sur l'état présent de St. Domingue* (Paris, 1776), 2: 79. The Code Noir placed no restrictions on mixed marriages. They remained legal in all the French colonies, except for Louisiana, in which Article 6 of the Code Noir of 1724 forbade the practice (Auguste Lebeau, *de la condition des gens de couleur libres sous l'ancien régime* [Paris, 1903], p. 93).

41. C. L. R. James, *Black Jacobins* (New York, 1963), p. 37.

42. All free men having children by a slave were also fined 2,000 lbs. of sugar (Lebeau, p. 96).

43. Elsa V. Goveia, «The West Indian Slave Laws of the Eighteenth Century,» *Revista de ciencas soiales* 4 (1960): 97.

44. Davis, p. 28.

45. Settlers were confronted with a wilderness to be tamed and cultivated and they included a fair share of criminals, debtors, and others gathered from the London streets and jails. Many of them came under one or another form of bondage. Abbott Smith writes that more than half of all persons who came to the colonies south of New England were bond servants (*Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America, 1607-1776* [Chapel Hill, 1947], pp. 3-4).

46. Carl Degler, «Slavery and the Genesis of American Race Prejudice,» *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2 (1959): 56-62.

47. *Slave and Citizen* (New York, 1947), pp. 121-23.

48. Passim.

49. David Brion Davis and others point out that the practice of interracial sex was less acceptable in the French colonies than in the Spanish or Portuguese (*The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* [Ithaca, 1966], p. 276).

50. See Davis; Marvin Harris, *Race Patterns in the Americas* (New York, 1964); and Sidney W. Mintz's rev. of Stanley Elkins' *Slavery* in *American Anthropologist* 63 (1961): 579-87.

51. Although the need for a labor force brought increasing importation of Negroes, only in South Carolina did the Negroes outnumber the whites (Phillips, p. 87).

52. Winthrop Jordan, «American Chiaroscuro: The Status and Definition of Mulattoes in the British Colonies,» *William and Mary Quarterly* 59 (1962): 18-19.

53. «Records of the Superior Council» *LHQ* 4 (1921): 524, and «Sidelights of Louisiana History,» trans. William Price, *LHQ* 1 (1918): 132-33.

54. This opposition reached its height around the time of the French Revolution. Conspiracies among French planters were discovered in the German Coast district, in St. Charles Parish, and at Pointe Coupée. These men were plotting to participate in a large-scale uprising planned to coincide with a hoped-for French invasion of the territory (Gayarré, 3: 354, 377).

55. From a letter by Laussat, the Colonial Prefect of France placed in charge of Louisiana in 1803, ibid., 3: 595. This underscores both the strategic and economic significance of the free coloreds.

56. Sterkx, pp. 97-111.

57. In 1784 they were sent to crush a maroon colony of fugitive slaves which had been raiding plantations and terrorizing whites in the area around the village of Gaillaré. At a meeting of the Cabildo on 4 July 1784 the Attorney General reported that several expeditions of free Negroes and mulattoes had not been able to destroy the colony, partially because their forces were too small and because many of the free Negroes were «creoles of this province, which reluctance is due to the fear of reprisals against their families.» (*Alphabetical and Chronological Digest of the Acts and Deliberations of the Cabildo, 1769-1803*, 7: 154, 194-96, 201-4).

58. «Index to Spanish Judicial Records,» *LHQ* 15 (1932): 534, and «Records of the Superior Council of Louisiana,» *LHQ* 24 (1941): 565.

59. «Abstracts of French and Spanish Documents Concerning the Early History of Louisiana,» trans. William Price, *LHQ* 1 (1918): 242, and Duvallon, p. 253.

60. «Index to Spanish Judicial Records,» *LHQ* 12 (1928): 341-48.

61. *Archives of the Spanish Government of West Florida*, 5:268-71.

62. *American State Papers* (8th Cong., 1st sess., ser. 1), Class X, *Miscellaneous*, 1:381, cited in Donald E. Everett, «Free Persons of Color in New Orleans, 1803-1865» (Ph. D. diss., Tulane Univ., 1952).

63. A visitor to Louisiana in 1803 wrote that «mulattoes and Negroes are openly protected by the government. He who was to strike one of these persons, even though he had run away from him, would be generally punished» (Paul Alliot, *Reflections*, cited in Alice Dunbar-Nelson, «People of Color in Louisiana,» *Journal of Negro History* 1 [1916]: 56).

64. *State v. Harrison*, 11 La. An. 722 (Dec. 1856), quoted in Sterkx, p. 224.

65. *Code Noir*, pp. 301-2, cited in Sterkx, p. 6.

66. *Laws of Las Siete Partidas Which Are Still in Force in the State of Louisiana*, trans. Moreau L. Lislet and Henry Carlton, 1: 591-94.

67. King, p. 334.

68. The free population consisted of 11,104 whites and 4,732 coloreds (census of 1754, cited in de Vassière, p. 116).

69. Lebeau, p. 1. These included the right to hold, buy, and sell property as they pleased, bear witness (even against whites), travel freely, own and sell slaves, marry whomever they pleased, and enter any occupation.

70. Ibid., pp. 111-14.

71. Before 1685 the militia had been the *only* authority on the island, with the governors and captains also serving as judges. Even after civil authorities were established, the militia, controlled by the planters, continued to have an administrative and judicial authority. It served as the chief intermediary between the Intendant and the residents, and was charged with preserving public order. An understanding of this system can be gained from a letter by the governor in 1761:

«It is a necessity . . . [with] 8,000 whites in all who are capable of bearing arms . . . and nearly

200,000 blacks — their slaves and their enemies — . . . around them day and night . . . Each little area has its leader, the captain of the militia. He supervises all the royal orders, public works, collection of taxes, settlement of quarrels between residents, the discipline of slaves, and the military services in time of peace and war. . . . It is easy to judge how useful such a sytem is in a country where every white man is armed, and must be, and where one can travel 30 leagues without finding a court of justice or a judge» (14 Sept. 1761, cited in de Vassière, pp. 115-17).

72. Julien Raimond, *Mémoire sur les Causes des Troubles et des Désastres de la Colonie de St. Domingue* (Paris, 1793), p. 18.

73. Ibid., p. 18.

74. Cited in Gabriel Debien, «Gens de couleur libres et colons de St. Domingue devant la Constituante,» *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 4 (1950): 214.

75. Pp. 86-89.

76. Ibid., p. 89.

77. A. Featherman, «Our Position and that of our Enemies,» *DeBow's Review* 31 (1861): 27.

78. Quoted in John M. Mecklin, «The Evolution of the Slave Status in American Democracy,» *Journal of Negro History* 2 (1917): 246.

79. Petit, *Traité sur le gouvernement des esclaves* (Paris, 1777), introduction, p. iii, quoted in Lebeau, p. 3.

80. When a group of 81 free coloreds left Louisiana for Haiti in 1860, a white newspaper wrote that their departure would «relieve us from the painful task of maintaining the proper equilibrium between them and whites, their superiors, on one side, and the slaves, their inferiors, on the other» (*New Orleans Daily Picayune*, 15 Jan. 1860).

81. Gen. James Wilkinson to Dearborn, 21 Dec. 1803, quoted in *The Territorial Papers of the United States,* Vol. IX: *The Territory of Orleans, 1803-1812,* ed. Clarence E. Carter (Washington, 1940), p. 139. During the ceremonies held in New Orleans to celebrate the transfer, Gov. Claiborne requested ammunition and «four or five thousand stands of arms» from Pres. Jefferson in the event of riots by the free colored Orleanians (Claiborne to Jefferson, 29 Sept. 1803, in Carter, p. 59).

82. Benjamin Morgan to Chandler Price, 7 August, 1803, in Carter, p. 7.

83. Claiborne to Secretary of State James Madison, 3 July 1804, in *Official Letter Books of W. C. C. Claiborne, 1801-1816,* ed. Dunbar Rowland (Jackson, Miss., 1917) 2: 234.

84. Claiborne to Madison, 12 July 1804, in ibid., pp. 244-46.

85. Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York, 1943), pp. 249-50. The revolt was finally put down severely by some 600 armed U. S. troops and militiamen. As usual some free colored men were also used. Claiborne was impressed with their zeal and thanked them for their «bravery and patriotism» (Claiborne to Major Dubourg, 14 Jan. 1811, in Rowland, 5: 100).

86. Dunbar-Nelson, p. 52. In 1803 the total free colored population was 1,566; the census of 1806 showed 3,350 free coloreds (Sterkx, p. 118).

87. Taylor, p. 37; Sitterson, p. 60.

88. At both the first and second sessions of the ter-

ritorial legislature of Louisiana, laws were passed to «prevent the introduction of free people of color from Hispaniola, and other French islands of America into the Territory of Orleans»; those from the French islands already living in the territory had to prove their free status or be classed as fugitive slaves (Dunbar-Nelson, p. 52; Gayarré 4: 218-19; Everett, p. 65).

89. Lawrence Dunbar Reddick, «The Negro in the New Orleans Press, 1850-1860: A Study in Attitudes and Propaganda» (Ph. D. diss., Univ. of Chicago, 1939), p. 7.

90. *Laws of the Territory of Orleans, 1st. Leg., 1st sess., 1807,* pp. 82-88, quoted in Sterkx, p. 153.

91. Dunbar-Nelson, p. 63.

92. *Laws of the Territory of Orleans*, p. 164, cited in Sterkx, p. 209.

93. Until 1818 redemptioners might find themselves in the service of either whites or free people of color; the legislature then «found itself called upon to notice the frequency with which free persons of color bought the white stranger, and in their tardy wisdom they forbade any such further purchases on their part» (Alton V. Moody, «Slavery on Louisiana Sugar Plantations,» *LHQ* 7 [1924]: 204).

94. Gayarré, 4: 336.

95. It was second only to New York as the largest port of entry in the antebellum U. S. (Roger W. Shugg, *Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana, 1840-1875* [Baton Rouge, 1939], p. 39).

96. U. S., Bureau of the Census, *Preliminary Report* (Washington, 1860), pp. 242-43, cited in Shugg, p. 38.

97. «The men of mixed blood filled all the places above the rank of artisan in New Orleans, and heavily preponderated in virtually all the classes but that of unskilled laborers» (Phillips, p. 439).

98. The expansion of the plantation system did serve, however, to further separate the free colored community from the mass of slaves. This was accomplished by the tightening on manumission, the plantation life of the slaves, and the fact that most of the slaves did not share the free coloreds' link with the old French culture. This distance also existed in St. Domingue, where the bulk of the slaves came fresh from Africa and where the conditions of work were much more brutalizing.

99. *Laws of Louisiana,* 9th Leg., 2nd sess., 1830, pp. 90-92.

100. Royal ordinance of 1764, cited in Lebeau, pp. 106-9; Debien, p. 213.

101. Lebeau, p. 75.

102. This prohibition had been adopted by several localities and was extended to the whole colony by ordinance of the governor on 29 May 1769: «Carrying arms is one of the special privileges that our King has granted only to certain privileged groups who are, by their professions, destined to use them . . . Since even men who are born free do not all have the right to carry arms, there is even greater reason why freedmen should not be allowed to do so without special permission. Such permission puts them into the highest position they could possibly hope to attain. Therefore, we have thought it best to limit that permission to only those who, in the present situation, distinguish themselves by a special zeal for the defense of country» (Preamble, «Ordonnance des administrateurs touchant le port d'armes des gens de couleur,» in Moreau de St. Méry, *Loix et constitutions des colonies françaises de l'Amérique sous le vent de 1550 à 1785* [Paris, 1784-90], 4: 466).

103. The act of 1830 to prevent the return of any free Negro who left the state was amended the next year to exempt all permanent residents, property owners, and those gainfully employed (*Laws of Louisiana*, 10th Leg., 1st sess., 1831, p. 98).

104. Although the population figures vary slightly, they all come close to those of Moreau de St. Méry for 1790: whites, 40,000; free coloreds, 28,000; slaves, 452,000 (Louis Elie Moreau de St. Méry, *description topographique, physique, et politique de St. Domingue* [Philadelphia, 1797], 1: 285).

105. Debien, pp. 215-16; James, p. 39.

106. Phillips, p. 439.

107. Reddick, p. 8.

108. Desdunes, pp. 123-25.

109. Although for the most part they rarely owned more than two or three slaves, there were some free colored persons with large slaveholdings; in 1830 in the whole South there were only 10 Negroes with holdings of 50 or more slaves – 9 of them were in Louisiana (Carter G. Woodson, *Free Negro Owners of Slaves in 1830* [Washington, 1924], pp. 6-15, 41-81). The 1850 census classified 242 free colored people as planters (DeBow, p. 81). In 1860 there were only six holdings of over 50 slaves owned by free Negroes, with an average of about 82 slaves each (Joseph K. Menn, *The Large Slaveholders of Louisiana, 1860* [New Orleans, 1964], pp. 92-94).

110. Desdunes, pp. 29, 30, 141.

111. «This distance, rigorously enforced *even after freedom* [italics mine] is the chief means of preserving the subordination of the slave, because of the implication that his color is identified with servitude and that nothing can make him equal to his master» (*Archives Coloniales*, F, pp. 71, 72, cited in Lebeau, p. 9).

112. Lebeau, p. 76.

113. Desdunes, p. 149; Raimond, *Observation sur l'origine et les progrès du préjugé des colons blancs contre les hommes de couleur* (Paris, 1791). Raimond made this point in all his speeches.

114. James, p. 34.

115. Debien, pp. 215-16.

116. Reinders, pp. 275ff.

117. Shugg, p. 119; Reinders, pp. 276-77; James K. Greer, «Louisiana Politics, 1845-1861,» *LHQ* 22 (1929): 260-61, 381-425.

118. 1778, Lebeau, p. 77.

119. 1773. Ibid., p. 89.

120. Ibid., p. 30.

121. Moreau de St. Méry, 6: 885.

122. James, p. 41.

123. 1779. As with whites, going to Mass had been a major social event for the free coloreds. When separate seating was instituted they stopped attending so as not to have to «submit to the public shame of segregation» (James Leyburn, *Haitian People* [New Haven, 1941], p. 117).

124. Moreau de St. Méry, 6: 727; Lebeau, p. 45.

125. *Laws of Louisiana,* 15th Leg., 2d sess., 1842, p. 308; 4th Leg., 1st sess., 1852, pp. 214-15; 3d Leg., 2d sess., 1857, p. 55.

126. Ibid., 3d Leg., 1st sess., 1850, p. 179.

127. Ibid., 4th Leg., 2d sess., 1859, p. 172.

128. Robert C. Reinders, «The Decline of the New Orleans Free Negro in the Decade before the Civil War,» *Journal of Mississippi History* 24 (1962): 91.

129. *Laws of Louisiane*, 4th Leg., 2d sess., 1859, pp. 214-15.

130. There were virulent attacks against them in the press, and vigilante groups began nightly rides to seek out and punish free Negroes (Reddick, passim; Barde, *Histoire des comités des vigilances aux Attakapas*, cited in Sterkx, pp. 309, 406-9).

131. Reinders, p. 90; Stahl, p. 375; Desdunes, p. 148; Lebeau, pp. 11-114.

132. *Archives Coloniales*, F, 261, pp. 611-15 (18 Aug. 1775).

133. *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1st Leg., 1st sess., 1846, p. 228, cited in Sterkx, pp. 22, 71-72.

134. *Baton Rouge Gazette and Comet*, 6 May 1859.

135. *New Orleans Daily Delta*, 17 July 1852.

136. *New Orleans Picayune*, 16 July 1859.

137. Max Frisch, *Biedermann and the Firebugs*.

138. The reasons for the success of the slave revolt in St. Domingue go beyond the refusal of the whites to collaborate with the free coloreds. Other important factors include the nature of slavery on the island, which in part accounts for the cohesiveness and leadership of the slaves, and the fact that the French Revolution of 1789 had touched off a civil war among the whites and was followed by a war with the Spanish which left the ruling class totally divided.

139. This discussion is based on Raimond; Debien; Emile Nau, *Réclamations par les affranchis des droits civils et politiques* (Port au Prince, 1840); Mercer Cook, «Julien Raimond,» *Journal of Negro History* 26 (1941): 139-70; Charles Oscar Hardy, *The Negro Question in the French Revolution* (Menasha, Wis., 1919); and James.

140. Although a full discussion of the free coloreds during Reconstruction goes beyond the scope of this article, questions of interest would be: Who provided the leadership in this alliance and on what basis was the unity established? Geraldine McTigue of Yale University is currently working on a dissertation on this subject and should provide us with some of the answers.

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THE FREE NEGRO IN THE NEW ORLEANS ECONOMY, 1850-1860

By Robert C. Reinders

The historian studying the place of the free Negro in the New Orleans economy is restricted by limited sources and by the fact that available materials are often disguised by the particular racial and social conditions which prevailed in the Crescent City. Manuscript census returns are woefully inadequate; people are frequently listed without a racial designation either because of sloppiness on the part of census takers or because lighter free Negroes simply failed to offer information about their race and status. Moreover the census of 1850 was taken in the summer when free Negroes who worked in the city during the winter season were absent. This was not a problem in the 1860 census since out of state free Negroes were not then permitted in the city. Even rough approximations can be confusing. The census of 1830 lists 11,906 free Negroes in New Orleans; the number rises abruptly to 19,226 in 1840 and declines rapidly to 9,961 in 1850. According to one scholar the decline from 1840 was the result of faulty census taking and therefore the 1850 figure is undoubtedly higher.[1] The slave cenuses of 1850 and 1860 do not list a single slave owner as a free Negro—yet from other evidence it is known that there were a few hundred. Manuscript tax assessments supposedly list people by race until the knowing researcher discovers well-known free Negroes without the characteristic f.m.c. or h.c.l. after their names. To an even greater extent this is also true of city directories. License applications sometimes list race; mostly they do not. Unless the researcher is thoroughly familiar with the free Negro community of the 1850's—and I make no such assumption—his information will be incomplete and his conclusions will be highly tentative.

Most of the 10,000 free Negroes in New Orleans in the 1850's were unskilled laborers. During the winter season additional unskilled free Negroes entered the city, often with forged passes, but the stringent laws passed against this group in the mid-fifties reduced their number to a negligible figure.[2] Laws against manumission also must have cut off the flow of unskilled free Negroes from the country parishes who generally moved to New Orleans after obtaining freedom. According to a list of 1,873 free Negroes who registered to remain in the state, 911 were unskilled. Most of the men were employed on steamboats and others were dock workers and domestic help.[3] Judging by newspaper advertisements local free Negro workers were enlisted to work out of the city on railroad construction crews and as field hands.[4] Three-fifths of the city's free Negroes were women and were more likely to be unskilled than men. Nearly half of the 911 unskilled mentioned earlier were women. They were largely employed in domestic service or at home as washwomen.[5]

Among free Negro *men* the ratio of skilled to unskilled was considerably higher than among Irish and German immigrants. Indeed free Negroes dominated certain skilled trades. According to J.D.B. De Bow, director of the 1850 census, there were in that year 355 carpenters, 325 masons, 156 cigar makers, 92 shoemakers, 61 clerks, 52 mechanics, 43 coopers, 41 barbers («the birthright of the free Negro»[6]), 39 carmen, and 28 painters. In addition there were free Negro blacksmiths (15), butchers (18), cabinet makers (19), cooks (25), overseers (11), ship carpenters (6), stewards (9), and upholsters (8). Only 179 were classed as «laborers» and only about an extra 100 could be considered holding unskilled jobs.[7] It is possible that De Bow might have exaggerated the totals in order to show that New Orleans free Negroes were more prosperous than free Negroes in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. However, other data indicates that free Negroes were prominent in skilled trades. Five hundred and forty skilled workers signed a register to remain in the state during the years 1842-1861 – this was slightly less than a third of the total.[8] Travellers noted free Negro artisans being served by Irish waiters and free Negro masons with Irish hod carriers.[9] The handful of short biographies of free Negroes that are available indicate that many were skilled workers. They even had their own organization, the Société des Artisans, one of whose founders, Victor Sejour, later became famous as a poet, playwright, actor, and Secretary to Napoleon III.[10] Eugene Warbourg, another free Negro craftsman, deserves special mention. He was a tombstone carver – unsigned examples of his work are probably still to be uncovered in the St. Louis cemeteries – who had a private studio on St. Peter Street. He went to Europe in 1852 and quickly achieved a noteworthy reputation as a sculptor.[11]

A few of these skilled workers were, according to the censuses of 1850 and 1860, relatively prosperous. Thus Peter Howard, a porter, and C. Cruisin, an engraver, were worth between ten and twenty thousand dollars, and A. Tescault, a bricklayer, owned personal and real property valued at nearly $40,000.00.[12]

Both skilled and unskilled Negroes were subject to changing labor patterns brought about chiefly by the large scale movement of Irish and German immigrants into New Orleans after 1845. Europeans tended to replace free Negroes as domestic servants, waiters, and hotel workers. The St. Charles Hotel, which once employed free Negroes, by the 1850's had an almost all-Irish staff.[13] Cabs and drays, usually driven by free Negroes in the thirties, were almost exclusively handled by whites two decades later. Of 146 permits for carriages in 1858 only five were given to free Negroes; and only four of 205 cab permits were granted to free men of color.[14] Negroes retained a hold as market sellers, but free Negro peddlers were replaced by whites.[15] The docks, once crowded with free Negro stevedores and steamboat roustabouts, came by the fifties to be an Irish preserve.

There were certain crafts which all but excluded free Negroes. Printing, baking, sailmaking, glazing, lithography, engraving, piloting were held by whites. Nor is there any indication that Negroes worked as screwmen loading cotton ships or as yard men in cotton presses. It is perhaps significant that the printers, pilots, and screwmen were tightly organized.[16] Then as now craft unions excluded Negro workers.

There were only a handful of Negro professional men in New Orleans. According to the 1850 census there were four free colored doctors in the city, but it is doubtful if they were all doctors of medicine. Alexandre Chaumette and Louis Charles Roudanez were the first recorded Negro doctors in the city. Both were educated in Paris and returned to New Orleans; after several years they were accredited by the local medical profession. Negro nurses were in great demand because supposedly they were immune to the periodic epidemics—during a fever season they could earn as much as ten dollars a day. There were free Negro school teachers, though the number declined during the 1850's as free Negro schools were closed. By 1860 all known free colored teachers were connected with a single school. A few free men of color made a living as musicians and music teachers. The profession of architecture was represented by Joseph Abeillard and Nelson Fouché, and in Norbert Rillieux the city could boast of a free Negro inventor-engineer. (Rillieux went to France before the Civil War and became headmaster of the prestigious Ecole Centrale of Paris.)[17] The profession of commission broker was represented by Thomy Lafon and Honoré Pottier. There were no free Negro bankers, but a few Negroes served as money lenders.[18]

Free Negroes found the world of business less restrictive than the professions. Most Negro places of business were small affairs, capitalized at a few hundred dollars and generally given to retail sale of groceries and liquor.[19] There were a few grocers like Francis Snaer, A. Blandin, and G.N. Ducroix who were worth over $10,000. The best known rooming houses in the city were owned and operated by free Negro women. In 1850 there was at least one wealthy free Negro wood dealer and one beer merchant. Merchandizing and wholesale enterprises were rare though P. Le Blanc managed a fairly prosperous dry goods store.[20] The best known Negro business was owned by Cecée Macarty who inherited $12,000 and by her death in 1845 had built it up to a business worth $155,000. She had an importing business in New Orleans, a depot in Plaquemines, and traded as far as the Attakapas country. Court records indicate that she had «Unlimited credit» and engaged in note discounting as a sideline.[21] Negro control over the cigar industry allowed men like Lucien Mansion and Georges Alcès to operate sizable factories. Alcès employed as many as two hundred hands.[22]

Only as gentlemen tailors could it be said that free Negroes played an important role in any line of merchandizing. According to Charles Gayarré the elite tailors—Dumas, Clovis, Lacroix—were all free men of color.[23] Lacroix certainly stressed his select patrons in an advertisement he placed in the city directory for 1853.[24]

> Lacroix, François, merchant tailor, (established 1817) importer of French cloth, fancy casimere, and the best and most extensive assortment of clothing of every description, made in Paris, by the first fashionable tailors, and an elegant variety of gloves, cravats, stocks, etc.; 23 St. Charles.

Lacroix and other free Negro tailors were at their most prosperous in the 1830's. It is the view of one contemporary free Negro that after 1840 New Orleans free colored tailors frequently moved North where their skills were in demand and legal restrictions were less onerous.[25]

One free Negro business man, however, who seemed to have thrived in the fifties was Pierre A.D. Casenave. Born in Santo Domingo and probably the son of a cabinet maker and grocer who resided in the lower section of the city, Casenave became confidential clerk of the merchant-philanthropist, Judah P. Touro. The free Negro was one of the executors of Touro's estate and in the latter's will was a beneficiary of $10,000. In 1853 Casenave was in the «commission business» and four years later he was worth an estimated thirty to forty thousand dollars and had an excellent credit rating. Later in the fifties he opened an «undertaking shop» on Marais Street and another place of business in the Vieux Carré. Unlike most undertakers of the age he did not have to live in close proximity to horses and cadavers as he had his own separate residence. He owned a hearse, four carriages, and a cab. It was said of Casenave that he was «the grandest undertaker of funeral splendor in New Orleans.» Judging by obituary notices his clientele was almost exclusively white. By 1814 he had assets of $100,000. It should be pointed out that Casenave's case was an exception; though undoubtedly a capable individual, his road to riches was made possible only through the instrumentality of an unusual white merchant.[26]

Perhaps reflecting the conservative attitudes of the Creoles and perhaps desiring to find financial security amidst the growing insecurity of New Orleans life, free Negroes tended to invest their surplus funds in real estate. All research indicates the validity of Oscar Dunn's response in 1867 to the question, «Is it not true of your people as a class that whenever they are able to accumulate property they generally put it into real estate?» «Yes sir,» Dunn replied, «they buy themselves a home.»[27] How much property they owned is one of the mysteries of New Orleans history. Erastus Puckett in a study written in 1906 stated that on the basis of his perusal of the 1836 tax records free Negroes then owned property valued at $2,462,470. For 1850 it had dropped to $755,765 and in 1860 it was $739,890.[28] Dunn informed a Congressional Committee that the figure was between fourteen and sixteen million dollars in 1860. In 1863 a group of free Negroes declared they paid taxes on property worth $9,000,000 but in the following year some free Negroes wrote to President Lincoln that their real estate was valued at $15,000,000. A delegate to the 1864 Louisiana Constitutional Convention put the sum at $13,000,000.[29] J.D.B. De Bow, using the inexact data of the 1850 census, calculated Negro property worth $2,214,020.[30] The *African Repository* reported in 1857 that free Negroes paid taxes on property in excess of $4,000,000.[31] Years after the Civil War a writer estimated that ante-bellum free Negroes owned one-fifth of the taxable property of the city; this would have been around $22,000,000 in 1860.[32]

My own guess, based on incomplete tax returns for 1858 and 1859, is that free Negroes were taxed on about $2,000,000 worth of property. I should point out that three of the largest free Negro landholders were not listed by race and I can assume that others, whose names were unfamiliar to me, were also «white»; therefore it might be logical to add a half million dollars to the above total. As a further caution it should be pointed out that real estate, slaves, stocks and bonds, business property, and horses and wagons were greatly undervalued. For example, market prices for slaves were two to three times greater than assessed value. About the only thing that can be said with some degree of validity is that New Orleans free Negroes owned more real estate than free Negroes in other cities.[33]

Real estate was owned by free Negro women to a far greater extent than among their white sisters. There were of course three colored women to every two Negro men; more important under the *plaçage* system free Negro women were rewarded with land and homes by their white lovers. It is not surprising therefore that several of the largest Negro landholders were women, a few having taxable property valued at over $20,000.[34]

Among the large male landholders was P.A. LeGoaster (or Leguaster) who in 1859 owned $51,000 worth of taxable property in the Dryades-Perdido-South Rampart street area plus additional real estate which he reported to the census taker in 1850 as worth $150,000. He was then the wealthiest free Negro in New Orleans. The most valuable chunk of real estate owned by a free Negro was an entire city block on Canal and Old Levee streets inherited by Aristide Mary from his white father. Some free colored men undoubtedly invested in land on the edge of the swamp which they could assume would be drained in the near future. François Lacroix owned two and a half city blocks in what is now mid-city; whole blocks in the same area were the property of Adèle Pavageau, Simon Bahan, J.V. Foneal, and Etienne Vanette. Smaller Negro holdings were common in the same district; land was cheap and a kind of isolation was possible.[35]

Slave ownership was fairly common among free Negroes. In most instances free Negroes owned only a single slave, seldom over three, which more than likely were members of the family. Frequently manumission followed. Thus records of emancipation courts for 1827 to 1851 show that of 1,353 petitions to free slaves, 501 were entered by free Negroes.[36] In the 1850's the process of manumission became more difficult —a freed slave had to leave the state— and in 1857 emancipation was made impossible; therefore slaveholding was the only means by which the letter of the law could be observed without complying with its spirit.[37] Certainly the slave system forced many free Negroes to invest their limited capital into the purchase of slave relatives.[38]

There were free Negroes who owned several slaves and undoubtedly viewed their bondsmen as an exploitable resource. Carter Woodson's pioneer study of 1830 census lists 2,351 slaves owned by 735 New Orleans free Negro masters; 153 owned five or more slaves, 23 owned between ten and twenty slaves, while Cecée Macarty owned 32 slaves.[39] It is impossible to obtain accurate figures for the 1850's, but by all indications multiple ownership of slaves by free persons of color was far less common than it had been in earlier decades.[40]

The law took an ambivalent attitude toward free Negro enterprises. The southern stress on property rights and the paternalism of the French and Spanish codes tended to benefit the free Negro in his economic relations.[41] Thus a Louisiana court in 1836 questioned a state law which restricted sale of bank stocks to free white citizens of the United States.[42] The rights of free Negroes to buy and sell property and sue in the courts was never challenged.[43]

Not all property rights however were held inviolate. The Louisiana legislature in 1859 made it illegal for a free Negro to own a coffee house, billiard hall, or retail store where liquor was sold. Three years earlier the state and city had passed legislation preventing free Negroes from obtaining liquor licenses.[44] The courts caught between property rights and emotional public demands for restrictions on free Negroes tended, in the fifties, to hedge. In a case involving the African Methodist Episcopal Church the court stated that the legislature could require them to disband; in the words of the justices: «the African race are strangers to our Constitution and are subject of special and exceptional legislation.» But the court insisted, their right to purchase property as an association was unchallenged. The court had its principles and its politics.[45]

Added to the hostility of the city and state governments, newspapers kept up a constant barrage of anti-free Negro editorials and comments.[46] These views unquestionably affected those free Negroes who were workingmen as well as those in business. Venture capital all but dried up as banks simply did not lend money to free Negroes and only a few colored men had surplus capital to lend to their fellows.[47] It is not surprising therefore that from the late 1830's sensitive free Negroes began to migrate—chiefly to France. A decade later the emigration movement became more common. J.B. Jordan, a moderately wealthy free Negro, wrote in 1850: «About five years ago the dislike to Colonization seems to have passed away. Some few would talk of it whilst others in their timidity would only listen. Now there are few persons who hesitate to speak of Colonization and of their intention to emigrate to Liberia in a few years.»[48] A move to Haiti appealed to more free Negroes than a return to a forgotten African homeland. After the restrictive legislation of 1855 Lucien Mansion provided funds for free Negroes who wished to emigrate to Haiti or Mexico and the Haitian Emperor in 1858 sent an agent to New Orleans to encourage migration. At least 281 «literate and respectable» free Negroes went to Haiti in 1859-1860 and it is the opinion of one scholar that «many more» migrated to the island kingdom.[49]

Migration was a drain on free Negro capital and skills, and in this light it is interesting to quote the *Daily Picayune*, normally one of the most rabid free Negro-baiting newspapers in New Orleans.

> They [free Negroes] form the great majority of our regular settled masons, brick layers, builders, carpenters, tailors, shoe makers, etc., whose sudden emigration from this community would certainly be attended with some degree of annoyance; whilst we can count among them no small number of excellent musicians, jewelers, goldsmiths, tradesmen and merchants.

The city's free Negroes, the *Picayune* piously—if not hypocritically—added are a «sober, industrious and moral class, far advanced in education and civilization.»[50]

The 1850's then saw the New Orleans free Negro hold his own in the skilled trades. Free colored common laborers faced increased competition from European immigrants, though in the boom years of the decade the demand for labor was great enough to prevent large scale Negro unemployment. Negro businessmen declined in number and prosperity since the 1830's—their's was a lost cause. Land was the one hope of security and the few Negroes who invested in property could be assured of profitable increases in land values. In general the fifties was a period of white hostility, restrictive laws, and declining economic opportunities. The «free coloured,» remarked a native of Massachusetts in 1853, «are in all states, in a position, both civilly, and socially, calculated to depress them. . . .»[51] It is understandable therefore that most local free Negroes, rich and poor alike, seemed extremely pleased to greet the Bluecoats in 1862.[52]

Notes

1. Annie Lee West Stahl, "The Free Negro in Louisiana," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly,* XXV (April, 1942), 381. In 1860 there were 10,939 free Negroes in Orleans Parish. Joseph C.G. Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860, Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington, 1864), 191.

2. Attorney General of Louisiana, *Report*, 1857 (Baton Rouge, 1858), 11.

3. Donald Edward Everett, "Free Persons of Color in New Orleans, 1803-1865," (Ph.D. dissertation, Tulane University, 1952), 199; Erastus Paul Puckett, "The Free Negro in New Orleans to 1860," (M.A. thesis, Tulane University, 1907), 48-49.

4. Everett, "Free Persons of Color in New Orleans," 203. There was also a demand for skilled workers like coopers and grinders in the sugar parishes.

5. Puckett, "Free Negro in New Orleans," 48-49.

6. William H. Russell, *My Diary North and South* (2 vols., Boston, 1863), II, 73.

7. United States bureau of the Census, *Negro Population, 1790-1915* (Washington, 1918), 209-210. New Orleans Negroes were more prominent in the building trades than their brothers in Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Charleston, Baltimore, or the Virginia cities. Robert Evans Jr., "The Economics of American Negro Slavery 1830-1860," National Bureau of Economic Research, *Aspects of Labor Economics: A Conference of the Universities-National Bureau Committee for Economic Research* (Princeton, 1962), 189; Luther Porter Jackson, *Free Negro Labor and Property Holding in Virginia 1830-1860* (New York, 1942), 101; James M. Wright, *The Free Negro in Maryland,* Columbia University Studies in History, Economics and Public Law (No. 222; New York, 1921), 155.

8. Puckett, "Free Negro in New Orleans," 51. The list included women's professions such as seasmstresses (189), hair dressers (10), and dressmakers (21).

9. J. Milton Mackie, *From Cape Cod to Dixie and the Tropics* (New York, 1864), 162; Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States* (New York, 1856), 589.

10. R.L. Desdunes, *Nos Hommes et Notre Histoire . . .* (Montreal, 1911), 38-40.

11. *Ibid.* Oscar Dunn, a famous Reconstruction politician, had been a free Negro plasterer in New Orleans. U.S. House of Representatives, *Testimony Taken by the Sub-Committee of Elections in Louisiana,* 41st Cong., 2d sess. (Misc. Doc. No. 154), 2 Pts. (Washington,1870), Pt. 1, p. 181.

12. Everett, "Free Persons of Color in New Orleans," 205-207.

13. *Ibid.,* 195.

14. City of New Orleans,. Treasuer, Licenses on Cabs, Carriages and Omnibuses, 1858 [and 1859], (MS., Louisiana Department, New Orleans Public Library). See Also Charles Lyell, *A Second Visit to the United States* (2nd ed., 2 vols., London, 1850), II, 160-61; Olmstead, *Journey in the Seaboard Slave States,* 589.

In Virginia cities, driving drays and hacks was a near monopoly by free Negroes throughout the ante-bellum period. Jackson, *Free Negro Labor and Property Holding in Virginia*, 77.

15. Everett, "Free Persons of Color in New Orleans," 202; City of New Orleans, Treasurer's Office, Peddler's Licenses for 1857 and 1858, (MS., Louisiana Department, New Orleans Public Library). Most of the licenses were issued to individuals with German names.

16. Robert C. Reinders, "A Social History of New Orleans, 1850-1860," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, 1957), 107-108. Barbers were organized in a manner that appeared to represent a labor union. This may have been a Negro group. *Ibid.*, 101.

17. Desdunes, *Nos Hommes et Notre Histoire*, 99-103, 106; Everett, "Free Persons of Color in New Orleans," 199-200; Charles Barthelemy Roussève, *The Negro in Louisiana: Aspects of His History and His Literature* (New Orleans, 1937), 119.

18. Everett, "Free Persons of Color in New Orleans," 205-207. One source states that in the 1840's there were eight free Negro brokers in New Orleans. Abram L. Harris, *The Negro as Capitalist: A Study of Banking and Business among American Negroes* (Philadelphia, 1936), 9.

19. Tax records found in the Louisiana Department, New Orleans Public Library reveal that the average free Negro grocery or tavern was seldom capitalized at over $500. The register of free Negroes entitled to remain in the state lists 94 men who classified themselves as "merchants." An additional 53 persons Puckett classified as "proprietors." Puckett, "Free Negro in New Orleans," 51.

20. Everett, "Free Persons of Color in New Orleans," 205-207.

21. Helen Tuncliff Catteral (ed.), *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro* (5 vols., Washington, 1932), III, 392, 589.

22. Desdunes, *Nos Hommes et Notre Histoire*, 123. Twenty-two free Negroes listed themselves as "manufacturers" in the registry of free Negroes. It is likely that most were skilled workingmen who operated one-man shops. Puckett, "Free Negro in New Orleans," 51-52.

23. Everett, "Free Persons of Color in New Orleans," 195.

24. *Cohen's New Orleans Directory . . . for 1853* (New Orleans, 1853), 151. Lacroix was not listed as a free man of color in the city directory.

25. Harris, *The Negro as Capitalist*, 11. Harris relied on an account of a free Negro, Martin Delaney, who in 1848 published *Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*.

26. "Louisiana," X, 497, XIII, 141, Dun & Bradstreet Collection (Baker Library, Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration, Boston, Massachusetts); Desdunes, *Nos Hommes et Notre Histoire*, 109; City of New Orleans, Licenses on Cabs, Carriages and Omnibuses 1858 [and 1859].

27. *Testimony Taken by the Sub-Committee of Elections in Louisiana*, 179.

28. Puckett, "Free Negro in New Orleans," 59, 61-62.

29. Everett, "Free Persons of Color in New Orleans," 227-28.

30. "The Free Black Population, North and South," *De Bow's Review*, XXIII (August, 1857), 217.

31. Sterling Charles Scott, "Aspects of the Liberian Colonization Movement in Louisiana," (M.A. thesis, Tulane University, 1952), 59.

32. P.F. de Gournay, "The F.M.C.'s of Louisiana," *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, LIII (April, 1894), 513.

33. Jackson, *Free Negro Labor and Property Holding in Virginia*, 138; Harris, *The Negro as Capitalist*, 7-8; Wright, *The Free Negro in Maryland*, 185.

34. Puckett, "Free Negro in New Orleans," 61-62; Everett, "Free Persons of Color in New Orleans," 206-207. For a discussion of the *plaçage* see Robert C. Reinders; *End of an Era: New Orleans 1850-1860* (New Orleans, 1964), 167-168.

35. City of New Orleans, Board of Assessors, Real Estate Tax Assessments [1858-1859], (MS., Louisiana Department, New Orleans Public Library); *Testimony Taken by the Sub-Committee of Elections in Louisiana*, 179; Everett, "Free Persons of Color in New Orleans," 206.

36. Puckett, "Free Negro in New Orleans," 32; New Orleans Emancipation Court, Docket of Cases, 1846-1851, (MS., Louisiana Department, New Orleans Public Library).

37. Sumner Eliot Matison, "Manumission by Purchase," *Journal of Negro History*, XXXIII (April, 1948), 146-67.

38. Harris, *The Negro as Capitalist*, 9.

39. Carter G. Woodson, *Free Negro Owners of Slaves in the United States in 1830 Together with Absentee Ownership of Slaves in the United States in 1830* (Washington, 1924), 9-15.

40. For a general picture of slave holding in New Orleans during the fifties see Robert C. Reinders, "Slavery in New Orleans in the Decade before the Civil War," *Mid-America*, XLIV (October, 1962), 211-21.

41. Catteral (ed.), *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro*, III, 392-93, 601.

42. *Ibid.*, III, 510. Stock and bond holding among free Negroes was rare. Citizen's Bank records for 1836 list ten free Negro bank stockholders, but for the years 1858-1859 I found no Negroes who reported stock or bond holdings to tax collectors. Everett mentions only one case of a free Negro owning stocks. Citizens' Bank, Minute Book No. 1, April 8, 1833-May 6, 1837, p. 246 (Archives Department, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University); Everett, "Free Persons of Color in New Orleans," 212; Harris, *The Negro as Capitalist*, 8.

43. In criminal cases free Negroes were often denied counsel and held arbitrarily. Fortunately free Negroes were law abiding and seldom had to face a police court judge. Jacob Barker to James G. Birney, October 2, 1845, *Letters of James Gillespie Birney 1831-1857*, Dwight L. Dumond, ed. (2 vols., New York, 1938), II, 976-78; Reinders, "Social History of New Orleans," 235.

44. Robert C. Reinders, "The Decline of the New Orleans Free Negro in the Decade before the Civil War," *Journal of Mississippi History*, XXIV (April, 1962), 90.

45. Robert C. Reinders, "The Churches and the Negro in New Orleans, 1850-1860," *Phylon*,

XXII (Fall, 1961), 246.

46. Lawrence Dunbar Reddick, "The Negro in the New Orleans Press, 1850-1860: A Study in Attitudes and Propaganda," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1939), 259.

47. Harris, *The Negro as Capitalist*, 23-24.

48. J.B. Jordan to Dr. J.W. Lugenbeel, October 1, 1850, "Letters to the American Colonization Society," *Journal of Negro History*, X (April 1925), 272. Jordan himself went to Liberia and opened a saw mill. Jordan to Rev. William McLain, August 25, 1850, July 24, 1851, *Ibid.*, 271, 275.

49. Everett, "Free Persons of Color in New Orleans," 128-30; Reinders, "Decline of the New Orleans Free Negro in the Decade before the Civil War," 96. On Lucien Mansion see Roussève, *The Negro in Louisiana*, 66-67, 115, 129, 152-53.

50. *Daily Picayune*, July 16, 1859.

51. "The White, Free-Colored, and Slave Population of the United States," *De Bow's Review*, XV (August, 1853), 132-33.

52. Donald Edward Everett, "Demands of the New Orleans Free Colored Population for Political Equality, 1862-1865," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, XXXVIII (April, 1955), 43-64.

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THE FREE NEGRO IN ANTE-BELLUM LOUISIANA

By Annie Lee West Stahl

THE QUADROON

The discussion of the free negro in Louisiana furnishes us no more serious social problem than that of the quadroons. These were daughters of white men by half-blooded mothers. Their position was indeed an anomalous one. Though often endowed with superior mental qualities and personal charms, they were forbidden by law to marry white men of any class. The same law gave them no protection against becoming victims of seduction and prostitution.

Besides the white and slave immigration from the West Indies, with resultant *gens de couleur*, there was a large influx of *gens de couleur libres* into New Orleans. Hostile legislation did not prevent this class from entering in large numbers. Like the white *émigrés*, they brought in the customs and manners of a softer climate, a more luxurious society, and a different civilization. In comparison with the free colored people of New Orleans, they represented a distinct caste, and they grew with such alarming rapidity that their number made for some time a decided influence on the home of their adoption.

Two hundred years before these blacks were introduced in Louisiana, the planters of Santo Domingo had been choosing the handsomest from among their slaves as mistresses. After this long process of selective breeding, there was produced a type so unusually attractive that when, in the latter part of the eighteenth century, the best Santo Domingan families had fled from the slave revolution to take refuge in New Orleans, accompanied by their sang melee mistresses, many of them had only one sixty-fourth part negro blood. These women were characterized as *Les Sirènes.* Practically all travellers, who left accounts of their experiences in Louisiana, used extravagant phrases in describing them.

Ingraham wrote,

> «I have heard it remarked that some of the finest looking women of New Orleans are quadroons. They have large fine eyes, good features, magnificent forms, and elegantly shaped feet.»

He spoke of them as walking the streets with the «airs of donnas.»

An English visitor exclaimed:

> They furnish some of the most beautiful women that can be seen, resembling in many respects, the higher order of women among the

> Hindoos, with lovely countenances, full, dark, liquid eyes, lips of coral and teeth of pearl, long raven locks of soft and glossy hair, sylph-like figures, and such beautifully rounded limbs and exquisite gait and manner, that they might furnish models for a Venus or a Hebe to the chisel of a sculptor.

One of the few writers, who differed materially in his description of the quadroons, was Featherstonhaugh, an English traveller, who wrote:

> I had occasion to see a good many of them during my stay, at a ball or two I had access to; and certainly it must be allowed that they . . . carry their persons very well; but in the lips and mouth, and in an unpleasing coarse texture of the skin, the negro blood shows itself very distinctly.

At the theatre he saw none remarkable for their beauty, which he explained as having been so elegantly described to him as females, beautiful beyond all comparison with others and very noted for «une belle taille, et un gorge magnifique.»

So great became the beauty and luxury of these quadroons, that in 1788 Governor Miro passed an ordinance which is one of the most extraordinary legal acts recorded in Louisiana. The directory of that year listed 1,500 unmarried free women of color, living in little houses near the ramparts. The governor's ruling caused it to become an act of misconduct «if one of these women walks abroad in silks, jewels, or plumes, and by so doing the woman is liable for punishment.» The only head covering which she was permitted to use was the *tignon*. Many of these women were well educated and accomplished to a marked degree. They possessed superior mental qualities and ambitions, which distinguished them from the pure negro. It was not unusual for quadroon children to be educated abroad. Many wealthy fathers, because of existing prejudices, sent their daughters to France for cultural advantages. Great pains were lavished upon the quadroon girl's training to develop her natural charm to lend attraction to the role which she was destined to play. Many of these, with good education and property, made their homes in Fance, where they found no difficulty in forming legal establishments.

James Stuart comments on the fact that the quadroons were frequently as well educated, as interesting, and as cultivated in manners as those who considered it almost a sacrilege to notice them in any way. He compliments them in saying that they conducted themselves ordinarily with more propriety and decorum than the white women.

A gentleman of New England education, in relating reminiscences of his experiences in the society of quadroons, was impressed with the culture and refinement which characterized three accomplished young women whom he knew. They were well informed, interested in current literature, and their musical taste was especially developed.

Harriet Martineau says,

> «The Quadroon girls of New Orleans are brought up by their mothers to be what they have been; the mistresses of white gentlemen. The boys are some of them sent to France; some are placed on land in the back of the State; and some are sold in the slave-market. They marry women of a somewhat darker color than their own; the women of

> their own color objecting to them 'ils sont si dégoûtants!'»

They despised the negro as an inferior, and ambitious ones regarded alliances with men even of their own class as limiting.

The quadroon balls, that divided the nights of the week with balls given to the white ladies, were attended only by white men. Visiting gentlemen were always introduced to these entertainments as they were considered the amusement *par excellence* in New Orleans. To these balls the young creatures were taken as soon as they reached womanhood. Here they displayed their accomplishments in dancing and conversing with white men in attendance. Reared in chastity, the mothers watched them carefully and accompanied their daughters to the balls until they found a suitable protector.

Saxon says,

> «Officially they [the quadroon balls] did not exist. Little was printed about them, except those references which found their way into the diaries of travellers . . . They were the principal diversion for white gentlemen.»

Only colored ladies were admitted. The men of that caste, it is understood, were shut out by the white gentlemen. «To take away all semblance of vulgarity, the price of admission is fixed at two dollars, so that only persons of the better class can appear there.»

The Duke of Saxe-Weimar Eisenach, in relating interesting episodes which occurred during his stay in New Orleans, describes his experiences at two balls which he attended one evening. First was the subscription ball given at the French Theatre, where only whites representing good society were admitted. He related that most of the gentlemen remained only a short while before hastening away to the quadroon dance, where they amused themselves to a greater extent and were much more at ease. The Duke found the quadroon ball much more decent than the masquerade ball, which he attended at the French Theatre, where only whites were present. The colored ladies were well chaperoned by their mothers, they were tastefully dressed, and did the honors of their entertainments with great propriety and grace. Of a quadroon masquerade at the Théâtre St. Philippe, that he left a white soiree to visit, the Duke says: «Several of them [the quadroon ladies] addressed me and coquetted with me in the most subtle and amusing manner.» This royal visitor confessed himself not indifferent to the tempting contrast offered by the two balls only a few blocks apart. He wrote that the women who attended these entertainments were almost white, and that from their skins, it was impossible to detect their origin. He took great care not to disclose to the whites where he had been when he returned to their ball. «I could not, however, refrain from making comparison, which in no wise redounded to the advantage of the white assembly.»

It is related that various families of daughters by the same father often appeared at these quadroon balls on the same evening when their legitimate brother was present.

One of the outstanding limitations placed upon this class of people was that of marriage. This form of union between a white man and a descendant of a negro, in however remote a degree, was not legal in the slave states. According to Article 95 of the *Civil Code of Louisiana*, the following restriction was placed upon such marriages:

> Free persons and slaves are incapable

> of contracting marriage together; the celebration of such marriage is forbidden, and the marriage is void; there is the same incapacity and the same nullity with respects to marriages contracted by free white persons with free people of color.

Before a marriage could be legally solemnized between a white person and a colored, the former was required to make oath that he had negro blood in his veins. The difficulty to a white man taking oath, lay not only in the falsehood, but in the realization that by acknowledging the existence of such a stain, he voluntarily shut himself out of the society of his people forever.

The step was once taken by a young American who resided in New Orleans. A rich merchant and sugar planter, possibly of Jewish extraction, had an only daughter, a quadroon, who was very talented and beautiful. She was heiress to her father's great wealth, but he refused to bestow his property on his daughter or anyone but a white man who would be willing to wed her lawfully. This involved taking the oath that negro blood ran in his veins. With a view of satisfying his conscience, the suitor, prior to appearing before the authorities, pricked the finger of his fiancée and inserted some of the blood which trickled from the wound into a gash which he had made in his own hand. After this he took the oath which made them legally man and wife. He did not delay in carrying his bride to Europe.

Possibly no city in the United States so abounds in stories pathetic and tragic as does New Orleans. The basis of these were the mingling of races, the conflicts of French and Spanish, and especially the relations between the whites and the fair women of color. Many, no doubt, have never been published. The quadroon and the octoroon are the subjects of hundreds of exciting and interesting tales. Duels were common incidents of the Creole dancing assemblies, and the Cordon bleu balls – the deities of which were the quadroon women. The affairs of honor were settled by a midnight thrust in a vacant square behind the Cathedral or in a daylight encounter at «The Oaks» or «Les Trois Capalins.»

The great ambition of the unmarried quadroon mothers was to have their children pass as whites and thereby have access to the privileged class. This desire to rise from a lower level to social equality with a superior race was implanted in the heart of the quadroon. Hence, an aversion on their part to marrying men of their own color, and their almost complete denial of one code of morality accepted by white women, and their consequent adoption of a separate standard of morals.

When the quadroon's admirer became desirous of forming a liaison with her, she usually referred the applicant to her mother. The parent inquired into the circumstances of the suit before regulating the terms of the bargain. In many cases she received fifty dollars a month, during which time the lover had exclusive right to the house, or if he so desired, he might live there with utmost safety and tranquility. Quite frequently he provided housekeeping quarters in a tenement in a certain part of the city. Sometimes the suitor agreed to pay a stated amount, perhaps two thousand dollars, or a sum in proportion to the girl's merits. The wealth thus secured varied with her attractiveness and the number and value of other lovers she might expect. Occasionally the contract included an additional payment of a specified amount for each child which the quadroon might bear him. Upon this fund she could retire when the liaison terminated or use it as a protection in the event of her suitor's death.

After the bargain was made, the mistress was called *une placée*. Her friends entertained her as a prospective bride would be fêted, after which she probably moved to her newly furnished establishment. «The attachment of the quadroon is so constant and her conduct so free from stain that the connection is considered in the light of a left-handed marriage.» According to custom, they were esteemed as honorable and virtuous while they were faithful to one man. If, in their amours, they became indiscriminate, they lost the advantage of this rank and became classed as prostitutes or slaves. The instances of their infidelity were rare. Though unfaithfulness was punished among them they no sooner disengaged from one attachment than they were free to form another.

The connection sometimes lasted for life; usually for several years. During this time a man sustained this relation, he commonly moved also in reputable society on the other side of town. Perhaps he married and had a family establishment elsewhere. Before doing this, he might have separated from his *placée*. If so, he paid her according to the agreement, sometimes more in proportion to his affection for her or his sense of cruelty of the proceedings. Some men continued to maintain both homes, particularly if the legal marriage was one *de convenance*. Occasionally the attachment to the quadroon was so strong that the relation was never discontinued. These men left property, at their death, to children from such unions.

When the time came for the man to take a white wife, the news probably reached his quadroon mistress either by letter telling her that she might claim the house and furniture, or by a newspaper which announced the marriage.

Lyle Saxon thinks the quadroon woman, according to her own standard, lost nothing by having served as mistress of a white man as the connection did not prevent her from matrimony with a free man of color.

In such liaisons, the children were illegitimate, and as such men did not contract marriages with them. The Catholic Church recognized unions of this kind and bound the husband to support and provide for his offspring, but this did not prevent him from entering upon marital relations. Among the French and Spanish settlers an entirely different feeling existed toward their children of a mixed race from that which the emigrants from states usually manifested. A man of the former class never appeared to regard such children as attaching any disgrace to his character.

> We are to remember, in connection with the conditions in Louisiana, that a general trait of French and Spanish colonists in all countries has been that they have commonly recognized and provided for the wives taken from among native women, negro, Indian, or any other nationality, and that they have acknowledged and provided for their children; while the Anglo-Saxon, as a rule, leaves these women and children to shift for themselves.

EDUCATION AND RELIGION OF THE FREE NEGRO

The education and religion of the free negro offer many interesting studies to those who trace their development. Distinct laws and customs governed both, and in many ways these people's participation in either was circumscribed and limited.

The free negroes who came to New Orleans after the revolution in Santo Domingo were of a higher type than the ordinary negro. They spoke the French language and all were Catholics. Some educated their children in France, the northern states, or in private schools at home.

In most southern states teaching a slave or free negro to read or write was considered a crime. The punishment was imprisonment and a fine of five hundred dollars if the offender were white; fines and whippings if he were a slave or a free negro. This restriction, with corresponding punishment, prevailed in Georgia. Tennessee prohibited the teaching of free negroes to read or write. Any semblance of school was stopped and teachers and pupils were shipped. Some states did not permit them to have churches. Usually, restrictions against meetings did not apply to the «assembly of negroes for moral and spiritual uplift on Sundays.» Georgia legislation provided:

> Should a free negro presume to preach or exhort his companions, he may be seized without warrant, and whipped thirty-nine lashes, and the same number of lashes may be applied to each one of his congregation.

Louisiana enacted legislation in 1850 to the effect that:

> In no such case shall the provisons of this act [of 1847, entitled «An Act for the organization of certain corporations in this state,»] be construed to apply to free persons of color in this State incorporated for religious purposes or secret associations, and any corporations that may have been organized by such persons under this act, for religious purposes or secret associations are annulled and revoked.

The *Daily Crescent* of October 2, 1848, contained the following article under the caption, «Unlawful Assemblage of Negroes»:

> For some time past the negroes of Faubourg Trêmé, in the first municipality, have been holding meetings on the Sabbath, as is alleged for divine worship, in the public house on Villéré street, without legal permission. Occasionally white men have been seen mixing in these meetings – and the suspicion having been aroused that they might be incendiary characters, Lieut. Viut, one of the Trêmé police, with one or two other officers, yesterday pounced upon the meeting, about 12 o'clock, as the preacher, a negro named Charles Dawty was in full blast crying, «De Lord be a coming, de Lord be coming, my bredren!»– and his hearers alternately contracting and elongating themselves like the man with the Indian rubber spine, were repeating his consoling assurance. Between fifty and sixty slaves and free negroes, and one white man were arrested in the house and marched to the parish jail.

The white man remained in prison until a late hour and the other suspects were released by friends or owners who gave security for their appearance to be examined. A report on the case given by this paper the following day alluded to three white persons arrested in the group. Sufficient evidence was lacking to prove that the meeting was for any other purpose than religious worship as the persons arrested were discharged – «no law existing to prevent mixed assemblys [*sic*] for that object.» Five of the negroes involved, who did not have proper identification papers, were ordered to leave the state. The colored preacher «presented to the court his appointment by Bishop Quinns of Indiana to a deaconship in the 'African Methodist Episcopal Church of America,' dated the 18 August, 1848; and a license from the presiding Elder, Mr. S. W. Chance, of the Wesley Chapel in this city, to preach, dated the 19th August, 1846, and renewed the 19 December last. Recorder Genois, with the view, we understand, of having these meetings more under the supervision and within the control of the authorities, has sent the papers connected with this matter to the Attorney General in the expectation that he may induce legislative action on the subject.»

In times of great fear of insurrection free negroes were restricted in assembling for religious purposes. Municipalities followed the example of the states in restricting this despised class. In a few such places as Charleston, Mobile, and New Orleans strict laws governing free people of color were not always enforced. Influential white persons connected with this class of people by ties of blood often intervened between them and the law and provided for their home life, private education, and religious training. «In these cities the free negro sometimes enjoyed so many advantages that foreigners saw very little difference between their situation and that of the whites.» In Louisiana were many of these mixed breeds. The father was usually eager to have his colored children educated in a manner that would reflect honor upon himself. If a master were living in concubinage with a slave, he frequently gave her freedom before the birth of her children so that they would be free. This usually resulted in the father's providing for their education – the amount and kind depending upon his wealth.

There were no state schools in Louisiana for free negroes. Education was provided through private schools or institutions sponsored by religious organizations. The law tolerated these city private schools by a significant silence on the subject. Public opinion also tolerated them by a quasi encouragement and patronage. Under the old regime this was one of the delicate subjects with which people considered it wise not to interfere in advance. So the law held its power in reserve and while it placed heavy fines and punishments on those who taught slaves and kept a strict watch over the movements of free colored people, it refrained from going any further.

Many wealthy fathers provided for their children's education in white boarding schools of the North or in France. The number of colored Creoles who received an education abroad approximated two thousand. The quadroon girls constituted a large percentage of this group. Of the free negroes who studied in foreign countries, some became wholesale merchants in France; others were bankers, editors, musicians, and physicians. The law profession was so closely guarded that they were unable to practice before the courts. Many of these who chose to remain in France attained distinction in scientific, musical and literary circles. A member of the Lambert family of New Orleans, who was decorated by the King of Portugal, became a professor at Paris and composer of the famous *Si J'Etais Roi, L'Africaine*, and *La Somnambula*. In the same field Basile Borrès also achieved unusual fame. Edmond Dédé was sent to Paris in 1857 by some interested townspeople to complete his musical education. He became director of the orchestra of L'Alcazar in Bordeaux and a good friend of Gounod. Natives of New Orleans recall when he returned to Louisiana forty-six years later to play for his native city once more. «He was old, but not worn, nor bent, the fire of youth still flashed in his eye, and leaped along the bow of his violin.» The list of famous musicians of the state included many free people of color. Victor Séjour, a native quadroon of New Orleans, became private secretary to Louis Napoleon and a famous dramatic writer of Paris.

Free colored people believed that the inferiority of condition necessarily attached to itself a lasting dishonor as the whites believed that color was a badge of an inferior race. This theory was illustrated by the following episode. A certain Mr. Bougville, who was considered a successful colored Creole teacher in New Orleans, related a story concerning a slave boy whose white father desired him to be educated in his school. The teacher accepted the pupil because the standing of the father in the community was a guarantee against legal proceedings. Objection soon came from the other pupils. They opposed the idea of a slave being taught in a room with them. Their parents would not tolerate such indignity. Mr. Bougville was forced to end the matter peacefully by dismissing the slave pupil and teaching him in his master's house.

The standard of respectability among free people of color contained many gradations of color. This was quite significant in regard to their schools. Some of the more fashionable private institutions admitted only those whose skin showed a large amount of Caucasian blood. «In others the grade was placed lower but the same principle was recognized; while the great majority of professors made the social condition of the parents the only criterion.» Most of the schools were open to all who were born free and whose parents could pay the fee required. They were usually held in private houses without any external appearance indicative of their use. When there was any pretext for complaint the greatest care was taken to conceal this fact. The French Creoles were mostly Catholics, so this creed usually prevailed in their private schools. There is no knowledge that a religious test was required of pupils or patrons.

In the region of Opelousas and Washington (formerly called Niggerville because of the large number of free negroes living in the village) were many free people of color representing thrifty and prosperous planters. They owned some of the best cotton and sugar plantations on which were large, comfortable houses. Many of these received a liberal education. According to travellers who left interesting accounts of their observations of free blacks, it was not unusual to find that many of the well-to-do class were educated. The Grimble Bell school for free colored children near Opelousas, usually enrolled about one hundred and twenty-five pupils and four teachers. Those attending the school were as a rule charged fifteen dollars a month for board and tuition. This institution continued its work for a number of years. After it closed, many of the youths of that section of the state were sent to private schools in New Orleans.

In Pointe Coupée Parish a large propertied class of free colored families usually provided for the education of their children by securing rooms in the principal houses and employing teachers for the entire year. Attendance at such schools necessitated the payment of a regular tuition fee. «For more than fifty years their schools have been kept open in this manner.» The contrast in the literacy of the whites with that of the free blacks was startling. «Out of nearly two hundred colored families who were free before the war, only one family is unable to read and write while among the white people from twenty to thirty-five per cent are in ignorance.»

There were numerous well-to-do educated free blacks in Natchitoches Parish along Cane River, Bayou Natchez, Bayou Snipe, Little River, and Red River. Large families lived at Natchitoches, Cloutierville, Isle Brevelle, and Campti. They were descended from the progeny of the old French and Spanish planters, noble and plebeian, and their negro slaves. Indian and Mexican blood also coursed through their veins. French blood predominated in the population of the Natchitoches region and this language was usually spoken. During a journey down Cane River, Olmsted learned from the captain of the boat, the *Dalman*, of a settlement of well-educated free people of color in the vicinity of Natchitoches. They spoke French among themselves but all were able to converse in English.

Education among these free negroes was prompted by the Catholic Church and included both religious instruction and training in the rudiments of learning. The first missionary work among Catholics in Natchitoches Parish was done in 1717 by the venerable priest, Antonio Margil. He ministered alike to white, red, black, and mixed. Records relate that a certain Father Martin of Avoyelles attended his flock among the rivers and bayous in that section in 1829. In 1840 Reverend J. Timson, afterwards Bishop of Buffalo, did excellent religious work in that country. All of these pioneer missionaries labored under great adversities and trying circumstances. When the New Orleans Archdiocese was divided with the resultant formation of the Diocese of Natchitoches in 1852, the Reverend A. M. Martin was appointed its first bishop. He was a man of great vision, courage, and determination. His faith and zeal were bound up in the cause of religion. His consecration in 1853 marked the beginning of the actual history of the Parish of Isle Brevelle.

Cloutierville was founded with Isle Brevelle as one of its missions. A plan was soon formulated to give free negroes on Cane River and in the surrounding country religious instruction and spiritual care at regular intervals. A four-room building was erected for this purpose. One room served as a chapel where the priest from Cloutierville said Mass once or twice a month and instructed the people in the rudiments of religion. The rest of the structure was occupied by two sisters, Daughters of the Cross. «In this same building the good sisters taught Catechism and the three R's, but only to girls. The boys were instructed in a little shack by one or the other of the Canadian 'Instituteurs'.» The instruction was given in French, for it was the language exclusively spoken there. Not long after this, probably in 1856, a building which served the dual role of school and convent was erected. Just previous to this, a wealthy quadroon planter and slaveowner, Augustin Metoyer (Grandpère Augustin), donated a plot of ground for a church, a rectory, and a cemetery. In 1856 Isle Brevelle was made a parish with a resident priest. Reverend F. Martin was the first to hold this appointment. During the Civil War when the «Yankees» marched through this country creating havoc and devastation, *les bonnes sœurs* left the place and never came back. Not until 1889 did the Sisters of Divine Providence undertake the arduous task of educating the young people of Isle Brevelle.

Various Catholic orders of religious organizations in New Orleans did much for the spiritual welfare and education of the free negroes there. In the Annals of the Ursuline Nuns we read:

> In 1831 two of the religious of our community were sent to the establishment conducted by Miss Alliquot in order to keep a school for free colored children. This school was located on St. Claude Street and was maintained by the Ursulines until 1838.

According to the story recorded, Miss

Jeanne Alliquot, a very charitable lady, dedicated her life to work among children, particularly negroes. When she was no longer physically able to carry on her responsibilities, Bishop Denekere confided her troubles to the Ursuline sisters. His distress appealed so keenly to them that they promised to add to their overburdened schedule the duties formerly assumed by this noble benefactress. «The Ursulines loved this work so dearly that the most distinguished and cultured among them esteemed themselves happy to be allowed to consecrate themselves to it.» The boarding school was so successful and its growth so rapid that the religious were not sufficient in number to care for all of its problems. In 1837 this service to which they had become so strongly attached was given to other religious.

In 1842 in the zenith of the brilliant, unwholesome notoriety of the quadroon women, the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family was founded. Bishop Blanc of New Orleans, who was deeply concerned in the needs of colored people, together with Father Etienne Rousselon, his Vicar General, organized a community of colored sisters whose duty was to care for negro orphans and poor aged negroes. Three young women of color, who descended from three of the oldest and most reputable free colored families in New Orleans, united with the resolve to use their lives for service. They dedicated themselves, their education, and wealth to the fostering of religion and charity. The group was soon joined by another young woman of good family and education. Mother Juliette was the eldest. We know little of the history or personality of these sisters, as they concealed facts relative to their lives. But we can see the great faith and courage manifested in the selection of this noble vocation. It called for untold perseverance in overcoming numerous obstacles which confronted a work of such character. Their first establishment was an obscure one on the Bayou Road. A few years later they took charge of a home for old and infirm women; later they built a house on Bayou Road between Rampart and St. Claude streets. Now the community occupies the building once used for the famous quadroon balls. These Sisters of the Holy Family followed the rule of St. Augustine, the novitiate lasting two years and six months; vows were renewed every year until after ten years profession. Then they became perpetual.

The first free school opened for colored children in the United States was the *Ecole Des Orphelins Indigents* which was founded April 20, 1847. It became the largest Colored Creole school in New Orleans. This institution was under the patronage of the Catholic Society for the Instruction of Indigent Orphans (Société Catholique pour l'Instruction des Orphelins dans l'Indigence). The Widow Bernard Couvent, a free woman of color and native of Guinea, provided by will at her death in 1837 that the lot and buildings on the corner of Union and Greatmen streets were to be used as a school for colored orphans. Ten years later ten free men of color, residents of New Orleans, formed an organization «for the purpose of establishing and supporting one or more schools for the instruction of indigent orphan children of both sexes.» This society had the power to own property and make laws and regulations for the discipline, education, health, and religious instruction of pupils. It further provided that when these children attained a certain age, the organization was authorized, with the consent of those in charge of the orphans, to bind them out to learn a useful trade or dispose of them according to the charitable purposes of the institution. Persons who contributed two dollars and forty cents annually were considered directors. This school was aided by Aristide Mary, a well-to-do Creole of color who left five thousand dollars for its support, and by Thomy Lafon, a wealthy free man of color. Before the occupation of New Orleans by Federal troops small appropriations were occasionally made by the state for the upkeep of this orphanage, but these sums were never sufficient to support it adequately. The institution has been in continuous existence. Many children, not orphans, are willing to pay a fee to obtain the thorough education which the school offers.

The founding of the Christian Doctrine Society of New Orleans in March, 1818, was an event of unusual interest. The inspiration of this organization was Bishop Dubourg, a Capuchin Father attached to the Cathedral of St. Louis. The association was specially privileged by two Popes. Originally the society admitted only men to membership. About a half century later it included women also. It became very active and its membership at times approximated two hundred individuals. «The primary object of the society was promotion of the spiritual well-being of its members by the practice of good works and the development of Christian virtues. The second aim was to honor in a particular manner the Most Blessed Virgin Mary in her Immaculate Conception, and also to foster a particular devotion to St. Joseph and St. Louis. The third aim was to help all its members to walk in the path by virtue, aiding them to avoid all that is evil and offering them all possible aid and encouragement to progress in spiritual perfection;» the practical work adopted as the means of furthering this object was the evangelization and spiritual care of the negroes. The society was considered to have a great influence for good and it continued to be a very active organization until it ceased to function in the last few years.

In 1859 John F. Cook went to New Orleans from St. Louis and organized a school for free children of color. This was at the time when discontent was prevalent in the South, when there was much talk of secession and war. Cook had violated laws by coming into the state and by opening a school for free children of color. He taught for a year. At the expiration of this time the schoolmaster left New Orleans as he had been warned that he was to be arrested and detained.

An unusual character in the educational and religious life of the free negroes in New Orleans was the Reverend Walter Rogers, one of the most prominent colored pastors in that city. While he was serving in this capacity he published a small book (about fifty pages) of extracts from his sermons, Bible narratives, hymns, and religious meditations for the use of the Sunday School. *Rogers' Compositions* was published in 1850.

FREE BLACKS, NEW ORLEANS, AND R. L. DESDUNES

By Charles E. O'Neill, S. J.

In 1804 the French-speaking population of New Orleans addressed a memorial of protest to the United States Congress. Their language, a most precious possession, was threatened. They did not doubt that the time would come when their children would speak the language of the new republic which now governed their Lousiana, but they petitioned that there be no sudden elimination of the French language from the legislature and the courts.

In 1968 the legislature of the state of Louisiana passed a bill that assures the teaching of French in public elementary and high schools.

Between these two events lies the history of the striking survival to our times of the French language in Louisiana. The pen of many a historian and novelist has sketched the portrait of the French-speaking Louisiana gentleman, the gracious *châtelain* of his plantation home and town house, his high-tempered sons and his vivacious daughters – *belles et chéries*.

What is not so well known is that many a French-language writer of nineteenth-century Louisiana was partly of African ancestry. Poets, journalists, dramatists - came from among the *gens de couleur libres* – the free people of color – and their descendants. They shared neither the privileges of the master class nor the degradation of the slave. They stood between – or rather apart – sharing the cultivated tastes of the upper caste and the painful humiliation attached to the race of the enslaved. Little is known of their aspirations, their achievements, their anguish.

The «free persons of color» are found in French colonial Louisiana as early as 1725. On August 14, 1725 Jean Raphael, a free Negro from Martinique, married Marie Gaspart from Bruges in Flanders. On November 27, 1727, Jean Mingo, free Negro, married Thérèse, a Negro slave belonging to M. de Cantillon, with permission of plantation manager Darby.[1]

From then on church records and civil archives mention the presence of the free persons of color. Some entered the colony as free people, some were freed in recognition of merit and loyalty.[2] Some had been slaves, but had been given freedom by their white lover or parent; some had purchased their freedom by extra work during leisure hours.

According to the *Code Noir*, the free person of color had the rights of any citizen of French Louisiana, except for marriage with and legacies from whites. In a society where a black slave could sue a white the position of the free person of color was more solid indeed. Yet the social pressure of custom maintained the superior position of the white over the person of color however free and «equal.»[3]

During the Spanish regime, easy emancipation prevailed and the free population of color continued to grow. The census of 1788 showed 1,701 free Negroes in a total population of 43,111 in Louisiana and West Florida.[4] In New Orleans their number grew from 99 out of 3,190 in 1769 to 1,355 out of 10,000 in 1803.[5]

While on several occasions the French had given freedom to slave volunteers in exchange for military service in the defense of the colony, the Spanish organized a militia composed entirely of free men of color (*pardos y morenos*).[6] They participated in the capture of Baton Rouge and Pensacola in Galvez's dramatic campaigns against the British during the American War of Independence.[7]

In the Spanish era (1766-1803) the free Negro enjoyed a lively social life in New Orleans. The city's first theater had mulatto stars.[8] The average white accepted this middle layer of society between himself and the black slaves, and dealt easily with its members. Yet the white population had two complaints. They suspected that the free mulatto might promote slave discontent and revolt. They admired the beauty of the café-au-lait quadroons and octaroons, but felt that the liaisons constantly undermined the morals of young white males.[9]

Revolution in Saint-Domingue sent refugees fleeing to Louisiana, white and black and mixed, slave and free, young and old. Cuba also sent emigrants to New Orleans in the first decade of the nineteenth century. By 1810 there were 7,585 free persons of color among the 76,500 who lived in the Territory of Orleans soon to become the state of Louisiana (1812).[10]

In 1812 Louisiana's Battalion of Free Men of Color was unique in the United States, the «only Negro volunteer militia with its own line officers.» Andrew Jackson welcomed the free Negro troops who fought heroically at the Battle of New Orleans (1815). The state legislature gratefully praised their patriotism and bravery.[11]

Valor and prowess in the field did not win expected American rights in the constitution and legislature of the new state. Only twenty-one-year-old white males could vote and be elected representatives; as their age increased they became eligible for the senate.[12]

Political discrimination did not block financial power. Several persons of color amassed outstanding fortunes, particularly in real estate. However, the vast majority of this ethnic and social middle group lived by arduous toil in trades. Most typical were the occupations of tailor, barber, carpenter, mason, cigar maker, shoemaker and hack driver.[13]

Without ever according political equality the Louisiana Supreme Court steadily protected the middle position of the free persons of color against the more militant whites. In the antebellum era, a recent study concludes, «free Negroes [in Louisiana] can be considered as possessing the status of quasi-citizenship and as such enjoyed a better position than any of their counterparts in other states of the South.»[14] Yet the free man of color continued to be «denied legal suffrage, the right to run for public office, and made the subject of discriminatory legislation because of his color.»[15]

As the abolitionist movement intensified, feeling against the free persons of color increased. The fear of slave rebellion was ever present, and the free Negro was, in the mind of the dominant but slightly outnumbered race, the most likely leader of any such uprising. Thus between 1830 and 1860 social pressure and legislative action increased against emancipations, against immigration of free Negroes, and in favor of colonizing resident free Negroes out of the state. Finally in 1857 legislation was passed putting an end completely to manumissions in Louisiana.[16]

When Louisiana had entered the union as a state in 1812, there had been among its total population of almost 80,000 about 8,000 free persons of color; most of them resided in the city of New Orleans. When Louisiana seceded and joined the Confederacy in 1861, her free persons of color numbered about 18,700, over half of whom lived in New Orleans; by this time Louisiana's total population had increased to about 709,000.[17]

During the Civil War three regiments of «men of color in New Orleans were the only organized [Negro] soldiery on the Confederate side.» With what freedom and under what pressure they enlisted is not clear. Overconfident Louisiana leaders dismissed these militiamen as not needed. After the Federals took New Orleans in 1862, the city's men of color, jointly with newly freed slaves, composed the first colored regiment of the Federal army. Louisiana «furnished more colored troops for the war than any other State,» but the majority of them were freedmen, who in the general population far outnumbered the «f.p.c.»[18]

In the Reconstruction era, education and savoir-faire led the free persons of color into leadership posts ahead of the newly freed slaves. Active in politics and in the press, these leaders surpassed their counterparts in other states.[19] With anguish and dismay the late nineteenth-century heirs of the free people of color witnessed the raging surge of the campaign for segregation and disenfranchisement. They – R. L. Desdunes and his friend Homère Plessy among them – did what they could, but they faced a tidal wave of emotions and laws.

Two decades after the wave had struck, Black historian Alice Dunbar-Nelson wrote:

> «There is no State in the Union, hardly any spot of like size on the globe, where the man of color has lived so intensely, made so much progress, been of such historical importance and yet about whom so comparatively little is known. His history is like the Mardi Gras of the city of New Orleans, beautiful and mysterious and wonderful, but with a serious thought underlying it all. May it be better known to the world some day.»[20]

It was this abysmal knowledge gap which Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes had tried to fill by his major work, *Nos Hommes et Notre Histoire*, published in 1911. Black pride and French pride flow in his recounting of these biographies. Gifted, but deprived of higher education, Rodolphe Desdunes not only provides data unobtainable elsewhere but also serves as a symbol of the people whom he memorialized.

Little about him has been published, little has been known. Even the indefatigable researcher Edward Larocque Tinker had little to show, and that little was not entirely accurate.[21]

Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes was born in New Orleans November 15, 1849. Jeremiah Desdunes, his father, had been forced to leave Haiti in a political struggle. Jeremiah's wife Henrietta was a Cuban.[22] The couple had two other sons, Pierre-Aristide (poet by profession, a cigar-maker by trade) and Daniel.[23]

Rodolphe married Mathilde Chaval, and of their union were born Wendell, Daniel (who taught music at Boys Town in Nebraska), Coritza, Agnes, Lucille, and Jeanne. The family lived at 928 Marais Street in downtown New Orleans.[24]

The family formerly had a cigar factory, with tobacco coming from their own plantation. However, jovial raconteur Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes was not a businessman; he wanted to write. In 1879 he obtained a job with the United States Customs Service as a messenger, with a salary of six hundred dollars a year. The following year he rose to clerk at fourteen hundred dollars a year. He was dropped from the rolls in August, 1885, an event perhaps related to the Republicans' loss of the presidency to Democrat Grover Cleveland. Yet Desdunes returned to the service as clerk, to serve from 1891 to 1894.[25]

It was during this period that Desdunes, with a few friends, organized the *Comité des Citoyens*, Citizens' Committee, which launched the *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* case.[26] The 1890's were a discouraging decade, for not only did the United States Supreme Court uphold racial segregation in 1896, but also the state of Louisiana revised its constitution in 1898 so as to disfranchise the Negro. The personal memoirs given by Desdunes in *Nos Hommes et Notre Histoire* reach only through 1896.

In 1899, once again at the Customhouse, Desdunes was given the post of assistant weigher at twelve hundred dollars a year on a probationary basis. On August 5, 1899, he signed the oath of office in a firm, round hand. His conduct and capacity having proven satisfactory, he received a permanent appointment on January 31, 1900.[27]

Life seemed secure at this time for Desdunes. The Republicans continued to hold the presidency; Theodore Roosevelt succeeded the assassinated William McKinley, and then went on to win a four-year term in his own right. (Desdunes would see that a grandson of his was named for his admired President Teddy.) The former merchant, turned-customs-inspector, had a position with a solid salary that permitted him to write – like customs officers Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville of an earlier period.

Then one day in 1911(?), Desdunes and four other officers went to supervise weighing for customs aboard a ship unloading granite. In a tragic accident dust blew from the stone into his eyes. Despite efforts made in federal hospitals to save the sexagenarian's eyesight, Desdunes was to spend the remaining seventeen years of his life in degrees of blindness.[28] He had to retire from the Customs Service in September, 1912.[29]

Still, he had his wife, his children, his grandchildren, and his friends. Dr. Dusuau, a pharmacist, used to read to him. René Grandjean used to converse with him. Grandmother Mathilde had goodies for the grandchildren, but the young people had to go outside when the patriarch engaged in long conversations with old friends. Desdunes wrote English with style and spoke it fairly well, but at home he preferred French. He liked his tobacco, a family tradition. Wine he took sparingly, a little with his meals but nothing more.[30] Such was the daily routine of this benign, dignified man.

His grandson, Theodore Frere, recalls a childhood memory. Grandfather Desdunes used to leave hanging outside of the house the gun he was assigned as a customs agent. Naturally the firearm rusted. Desdunes would say: «When I cannot subdue a man with my bare hands, I will quit, because life was given by God, not to be taken by men.»[31]

While visiting his son Daniel in Omaha,

Nebraska, Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes died on August 14, 1928, of cancer of the larynx. It was occasionally said that he died in California; this misconception may have arisen from the fact that it was Mrs. Coritza Mora of Stockton, California, who made the arrangements for sending the remains to New Orleans. He was interred in the family tomb in St. Louis Cemetery No. 2, Square 3.[32] His widow, two sons, and three daughters survived the venerable author who had celebrated the eloquence and the suffering of his people.[33]

Desdunes' literary career included contributions to *The Crusader* (1889-98), a journal published by Dr. L. Martinet. From Desdunes' pen came also some pamphlets – for example, *Hommage rendu à la mémoire d'Alexandre Aristide Mary décédé à la Nouvelle-Orléans, le 15 mai, 1893, à l'âge de 70 ans.* The eighteen-page pamphlet was «not for sale,» but was distributed among friends. Mary's generosity as quiet contributor to many causes was praised. Desdunes told of how Mary had opposed P. B. S. Pinchback regarding the establishment of a separate state university for blacks, which would be called «Southern University.» A visit by Desdunes had led Mary to lend his support to the fund that would carry Homère Plessy's case through the courts.

Tragically, Mary, a septuagenarian «hypochondriac,» had taken his own life. Desdunes, annoyed that Mary had been refused church burial, complained that some persons less Christian than this *«libre penseur»* suicide had been accorded religious funeral services. He challenged his local Catholic clergy to see to the elimination of «unjust manoeuvers» and «affronts, even in the house of God.»[34]

In March, 1907, Desdunes published a fifteen-page pamphlet entitled *A Few Words to Dr. DuBois 'With Malice Toward None'.* Acknowledging the position of the learned northern Negro academician, Desdunes was piqued by W. E. B. Du Bois' blanket generalization that the southern Negro lacked book learning and industrial skills. «The Negroes of the South do not deserve to stand under the indictment which the first part of that declaration conveys.»[35] The New Orleans Creole Negro listed learned and distinguished Louisianians of his race.

Desdunes went on to take issue with Du Bois' analysis and procedure in matters of race, history, revolution, and rights. He felt that Du Bois had uncritically accepted Toussaint L'Ouverture as the greatest black hero of the Saint-Domingue revolution, whereas, in actuality, he argued, L'Ouverture was quite willing to see the island remain under France and to accept a position of authority in the French administration. It was Jean Jacques Dessalines whom Desdunes considered the real hero. In a phrase that must have made Du Bois wince, Desdunes stated that Toussaint L'Ouverture was the Booker T. Washington of Haiti.

In strong terms Desdunes condemned white oppression. However, he felt the day would come when just whites would oppose unjust whites as in the days of abolition. «By striving for justice, justice we may obtain, by reaching out for justice and domination, we are in danger of losing both.»[36]

Desdunes excoriated all flight from Negro racial identity. He felt that the present and future need of the Negro was a high moral integrity and a confident self-identity. This foundation he considered basic to political peace and happiness.

At the conclusion of the pamphlet, Desdunes posed a fundamental challenge to Du Bois' generalizations, for he distinguished the hopeful, philosophical Latin-culture Negro from the doubtful, practical Anglo-Saxon-culture Negro. Whatever may be thought of Desdunes' ideology, he shows himself in this pamphlet to be a reflective thinker and a well-read, scintillating discussant.

Desdunes' major work, *Nos Hommes et Notre Histoire*, had fortunately been completed before his sad loss of sight. The latest date given in the book is 1908. In 1911, L. Martin of Montreal urged the author to publish his manuscript and made arrangements for its printing and publication in the largest French-speaking city in America.[37]

Keen feeling and simple manner run through his nineteenth-century style. The sophisticated critic will look in vain for embellishing conceits. His book was his avocation – a labor of love for his people. The data he was able to obtain are often anecdotal and uneven, and unevenly distributed, but his work is a unique source of information and insight regarding these men and women who suffered for race and for language.

Notes

1. St. Louis Cathedral Archives, Marriage Book I, 89, 140.

2. See Louisiana State Museum Archives, May 13, 1730, LHQ, IV, 524.

3. Paris, Archives des Colonies, B43, 388-407.

4. H. E. Sterkx, *The Free Negro in Ante-Bellum Louisiana*, (Rutherford, N. J., 1972), 85.

5. Lawrence Kinnaird, ed., *Spain in the Mississippi Valley 1765-1794* (Washington, AHA, 1940), II, 196

6. Archival references in E. J. Burrus, J. de la Peña, C. E. O'Neill and M. T. Garcia, *Catálogo de Documentos des Archivo General de Indias Sección V, Gobierno, Audiencia de Santo Domingo, sobre la Epoca Española de Luisiana* (New Orleans, 1968), II, 506. Roland C. McConnell, *Negro Troops of Ante-Bellum Louisiana* (Baton Rouge, 1968), 4-32.

7. Sterkx, *The Free Negro*, 74. McConnell, *Negro Troops*, 17-21.

8. Rene LeGardeur, Jr., *The First New Orleans Theatre* (New Orleans, 1963), 10-14.

9. Sterkx, *The Free Negro*, 61 ff and 84.

10. *Aggregate Amount of Persons Within the United States in the Year 1810* (Washington, 1811), I, 82.

11. McConnell, *Negro Troops*, 53, 67, 70 and 93; Marcus B. Christian, *Negro Soldiers in the Battle of New Orleans* (New Orleans, 1965).

12. Louisiana Constitution of 1812, Art. II, Sec. 4, 8 and 12. Louisiana Constitution of 1845, Title II, Art. 6, 10 and 18.

13. Robert C. Reinders, «The Free Negro in the New Orleans Economy,» *Louisiana History*, 6 (1965), 274-81. Sterkx, *The Free Negro*, Chapter V, «The Economic Life of the Free Negro.»

14. Sterkx, *The Free Negro*, 171.

15. *Ibid.*, 199.

16. *Ibid.*, 119-50, 285-315.

17. *Population of the United States in 1860* (Washington, 1864), 194.

18. Alice Dunbar-Nelson, «People of Color in Louisiana,» *Journal of Negro History*, II (1917), 67-69. John D. Winter, *The Civil War in Louisiana*, (Baton Rouge, 1963), 35, 129, 144-45, 209, 253.

19. Charles B. Rousseve, *The Negro in Louisiana* (New Orleans, 1937), 96-125.

20. Dunbar-Nelson, «People of Color in Louisiana,» 78.

21. Edward Larocque Tinker, *Les écrits de langue française en Louisiane au XIXᵉ siècle* (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1932), 134.

22. Certificate of Death A4339, Omaha-Douglas County Health Department; interview with Mr. Theodore Frere, grandson of Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes, May 2, 1971.

23. Edward Maceo Coleman, *Creole Voices: Poems in French by Free Men of Color* (Washington, D. C.: The Associated Publishers, Inc., 1945), 122-23. The late A. P. Tureaud, distinguished

attorney and historian, enlightened and encouraged me as he did also the late Mr. Coleman.

24. Interview with Theodore Frere; New Orleans *City Directory, 1912.*

25. J. W. Fath, Acting Chief, Civilian Reference Branch, National Records Center, to Charles E. O'Neill, June 8, 1971; interview with Theodore Frere.

26. Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes, *Hommage rendu . . . Alexandre Aristide Mary . . .* (New Orleans, 1893), 11.

27. Oath of office, August 5, 1899; oath of office for absolute appointment, February 5, 1900; L. J. Gage to Collector of Customs, New Orleans, Louisiana, January 31, 1900. National Archives, Treasury Department, Record Group 56. With gratitude to Mark G. Eckhoff, Director of Legislative, Judicial, and Diplomatic Records Division.

28. Interview with Theodore Frere.

29. J. W. Fath to Charles E. O'Neill, June 8, 1971.

30. Interview with Theodore Frere.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Certificate of Death A4339. (On the certificate his «color or race» is listed as «French.») Tinker, *Les écrits de langue française,* 134. F. G. Rome, Executive Director, New Orleans Archdiocesan Cemeteries, to Charles E. O'Neill, April 1, 1971. Desdunes may have been en route to or from California.

33. New Orleans *Times-Picayune,* August 17, 1928.

34. Desdunes, *Hommage rendu,* 17. Another eulogy by Desdunes, two pages of verse, was printed and distributed, *A la memoire de* [sic] *Eugène Antoine, Décédé le 19 Décembre 1905, à l'âge de 61 ans.* (New Orleans, 1906[?]).

35. Rodolphe Lucien Desdunes, *A Few Words to Dr. DuBois 'With Malice Toward None'* (New Orleans, 1907), 2.

36. *Ibid.,* 14.

37. Tinker's theory in *Les écrits de langue française* – that no Louisiana printer would have accepted the job because the book applied the term *créole* to persons of color – seems contrived.

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SOME EFFECTS OF ACADIAN SETTLEMENT ON THE PATTERN OF LAND OCCUPANCE IN LAFAYETTE PARISH

By Lyle Givens Williams

Acadian settlement had an important influence on the pattern of land occupance in Lafayette Parish. Among the earliest French colonists in the New World, the Acadians had lived for nearly a hundred and fifty years in Nova Scotia when Great Britain gained possession of all French territory in Canada in 1763. Of sturdy peasant stock, the Acadians had for generations earned their livelihood by fishing, farming, and raising cattle. They were ardent Roman Catholics with a zealous, almost fanatic love for their families and for France. Little need be said here of their stubborn resistance to British rule, their deportation, now celebrated as «Le Grand Dérangement,» and the hardships of the long odyssey which finally brought some four to six thousand of them to Louisiana between 1758 and 1790. Here they were kindly received by government officials and private individuals alike. They were settled along the Mississippi above New Orleans on lands in what are today St. James and Ascension parishes. Later arrivals were sent by Spanish governors to the more remote areas; Natchitoches, the Opelousas, and the Attakapas.

This paper, however, is concerned primarily with those Acadians who came to the Attakapas and settled along the banks of the bayous of what is now Lafayette Parish, along the Carencro, the Queue de Tortue, and the Vermillion.

An early record of the group which reached the Attakapas is found in the archives of the Cabildo in a contract signed on April 4, 1765, by eight chiefs of the Acadians, «chefs des Acadiens,» with Antoine Bernard Dauterive, a former captain of infantry who owned large tracts of land in the Attakapas around the present Lake Dauterive in Iberia Parish. Through this contract Dauterive promised to furnish to each Acadian family for six consecutive years five cows with their calves and one bull. He agreed to take the risk of the loss of the cattle only the first year; as soon as notified of a loss, he would immediately replace the animal by another one of the same kind and would not hold the Acadians responsible for losses by death during the first year. He reserved the right to rescind the contract after three years and to take back his cattle, all increase to be divided between him and them. The Acadians might sell some of the cattle before the expiration of the contract, provided they gave him half the price received. At the end of six years, they were to give back to M. Dauterive the same number of cattle they had received from him, of the same age and kind as those that had been received. All increase and profits were to be equally divided between M. Dauterive and them. The chiefs of the Acadians, Joseph Broussard, dit Beausoleil, Alexandre Broussard, Joseph Guillebeau, Jean Dugas, Olivier Thibaudau, Jean-Baptiste Broussard, Pierre

Arseneau, and Victor Broussard, bound themselves and their colleagues «in solido», and mortgaged all their property. So did M. Dauterive. The contract was signed before Jean-Baptiste Garic, notary, in the presence of Charles Aubry, acting governor of the colony; Nicolas Foucault, ordonnateur; Nicholas Chauvin de la Frenière, attorney-general; Mazange; and Couturier.[1] The contract was signed after the cession of Louisiana to Spain, but before the Spanish governor had arrived in New Orleans. Aubry, a Frenchman, was acting for the King of Spain.

Alcée Fortier comments, «It is not stated where the Acadians were to go after leaving New Orleans; but some of their chiefs certainly went to the Attakapas country, for in the church register in St. Martinville is a certificate of the birth of a daughter of Olivier Thibaudau born on May 10, 1765 . . .[2]

Fortier was unnecessarily cautious: he might better have said that most of the chiefs found their way to the Attakapas, and he might have added, to Lafayette Parish. Not only do the St. Martinville church records testify that Arceneaus and Broussards came there, but the *American State Papers* list four of the eight signers of the aforementioned contract as holders of Spanish patents for lands along the Carencro, the Queue de Tortue, and the Vermillion.[3]

Among the first official acts of General Alejandro O'Reilly, after he consummated the transfer of Louisiana to Spain (1769), was the ordering of a census and the publishing of the regulations in regard to land grants.[4] In order to secure an early compliance with the condition of the grants, the grantee was declared incapable of alienating the land until the stipulated improvements were made:

> grants of a square league were authorized in the districts of Attakapas, Opelousas, and Natchitoches, where the inhabitants paid more attention to raising cattle than to the culture of the soil. Where the land was less than a league in depth, the grant was of two leagues in front with a depth of half a league. But no grant of forty-two arpents in front and depth was authorized to be made to any person who was not the owner of one hundred head of tame horned cattle, a few horses and sheep and two slaves.[5]

All grants were to be made in the name of the King by the governor of the province.

It should be borne in mind that under the terms of the regulations none of the Acadians would have qualified for the square league of land which was the maximum allowed. The cattle they had acquired from Dauterive would not by 1769 have increased to a hundred, and, if by some good fortune, any family had the required number of cattle, it most certainly could not have met the requirement concerning slaves.

The accompanying map was compiled from the lists of confirmed grants in the *American State Papers* and from the maps of early surveys in the Lafayette and the St. Martin Parish Court houses. The hatched sections represent the lands titles to which were confirmed by right of Spanish patent. Confirmation was made by a United States Commission on evidence provided by United States surveyors who were sent in the territory after the Louisiana Purchase. The Spanish patent lands without exception lie along the bayous Carencro, Vermillion, and Queue de Tortue. These lands comprise one hundred forty numbered sections, the property of some seventy-eight individuals, many with the same family name, most of them Acadian.[6]

The largest families, the Arceneaus and the Broussards, settled in Ts 8 & 9S Rs 4 & 5E and in T 10s Rs 4, 5 & 6E, respectively; the Dugas in T 9S R 4 & 5E; the Guilbeaus near the Arceneaus in T 8S R 4E; the Thibaudaus in T 8S R 4E and T 9S R 4 & 5E. (They have intermarried with each other and with other Acadian and Creole families to such an extent that today they are nearly all related.)

It is perhaps natural that the chiefs should have chosen the best lands. The Arceneaus settlement which was so numerous in 1816 that Darby locates it on his map, occupied the first terrace that rises out of the swamp west of the Vermillion river, high well-drained land near good cypress timber. The Broussards east of the Vermillion are in the Cote Gelée. Darby describes the banks of the Vermillion in enthusiastic terms:

> From the diversity of soil, and elevation, there is no risk in giving the preference in beauty of appearance to the banks of the Vermillion, over any other river in Louisiana, south of Bayou Boeuf . . . If situations favorable to health, united to the most agreeable prospects, which are bounded but by the horizon, should be sought after; were taste to select sites for building, its research would here be requited, and be gratified by the breezes which come direct from the bosom of the ocean; fancy itself could not form a more delightful range than the Carrion Crow and Cote Gelée settlements . . . The lower parts of the Vermilion, no doubt will suit the culture of sugar cane, whilst the whole extent of its banks are well adapted to cotton and corn . . . The Vermilion, by its union with the gulf, forms the natural communication of its inhabitants with the sea . . . the Carrion Crow a part of the boundary between Opelousas and Attakapas . . . [has] some good farms «along both sides of the woods.»[7]

The land was not only good for cattle, as the Spanish thought, but also for agriculture. The Acadians, however, were traditional cattle raisers, and «vacheries» were numerous throughout the parish.

Among the claims recognized by the United States Government in 1816 were those to lands which had been settled and occupied prior to December 20, 1803. Many of the sections were claimed by the adjacent Spanish patent holders, some of them being owned jointly for «vacheries» or as sources of fire wood. Seven of these exceed a thousand acres.

With prospering herds of cattle and rich agricultural lands one would expect some of the inhabitants to be wealthy and seek the refinements and luxuries that wealth makes possible. But such was not the case. On the contrary, Darby was struck when traveling in the Attakapas and Opelousas by the plainness of the homes where even wealthy families were likely to keep a loom in the parlor.

In 1857, forty years after Darby's visit, Frederick Law Olmstead comments on the close knit communities:

> «If a Creole farmer's child marries, he will build a house for the new couple adjoining his own; and when another marries, he builds another house – so often his whole front on the river is at length occupied. Then he begins to build others,

> back of the first and so, there gradually forms a little village, wherever there is a large Creole family owning any considerable piece of land.»[8]

Olmstead does not explain what he considered a «considerable piece of land.» He is speaking of the Creoles, but the pattern of division was the same among the Acadians so that family plots which originally contained two to six arpents along the banks of a stream were soon subdivided into many small farms.

The Acadian, frugal and suspicious of strangers, built his own independent farmstead, cultivated his fields with the help of his sons, sons-in-law, and eventually a few slaves, raised horses and cattle and had little need for the world beyond his horizon. His establishments, though they were occasionally extensive and might be called plantations, as a few of them were, were really just large farms.

The frugality and modesty of the early Acadian, recognized by his contemporaries, persisted through the years, and even during ante-bellum prosperity the houses remained unpretentious. A house known as the Shute Prejean house which is perhaps a hundred and fifty years old, still stands in the middle of a cotton field on Prejean land. Though a little larger than some, it reveals the usual lines of pioneer Acadian houses. Its stout cypress timbers have defied the ravages of time. However, it is obvious that even in its prime, it was not a grand house.

The same might be said for the Arceneaux and the Latiolais houses. The latter has a new roof, but is otherwise unchanged. The porch on the Arceneaux house is obviously not the original. The Couret House is not far from the Sidney Martin house and is very close, on the adjoining farm, to the Torian House. Mr. and Mrs. William Couret, second cousins, were both descended from the builder of the house, which stands not far from the Moss Street Extension, the old road to Carencro which ran along the top of the Prairie Terrace. The Mudd house is on North Sterling, between Mudd and Simcoe. The story is that it was built as a wedding present for a Miss Martin who married a Mouton. For all their comparative comfort and luxury, these houses are not comparable to the elegant mansions of wealthy planters along the Teche.

Across the road from the Latiolais house is the Martin house, not the Andre Martin House which was on Magnolia Plantation on the site now occupied by the Christian Brothers School, but the Sidney Martin House, a short distance of Moss Street Extension. It is a very modest house of wood and plaster. The walls in the oldest part of the house, which was only a two-room structure, are still insulated with the original «bousillage». Records indicate this house is about a hundred and forty-eight years old.

In pre-Civil War days, the Moutons and the Martins acquired more land and rose to more important positions than their neighbors. Governor Mouton's domain, which was near the Vermillion and was named Ile Copal, might have warranted the name plantation, but its extent did not exceed four hundred acres. The governor's house was destroyed by fire shortly after the property was acquired by the Lafayette School Board. Three other houses built by the Moutons about 1848 still stand. They are almost identical in style: two, the Couret House, and the Mudd House, now owned by the Kenneth Bowens, are in excellent condition and just about as they were, except for the absence of the outside kitchens; the third and also the largest, the William Bethell Torian house, is dilapidated beyond repair. It can be seen from I-10 near its intersection with the Evangeline Thruway West.

The most spacious home in the parish and the only one around which hangs a tradition of lavish entertaining was the Long Plantation House, on the east side of the Vermillion below the old Vermillion River Bridge across which ran the Old Spanish Trail, old Highway 90. It was the scene of brilliant parties for visitors from New Orleans. But Beraud, a man of exotic tastes, was a Frenchman, not an Acadian. He had married the daughter of an early surveyor, Campbell, a Scotsman, who himself had married into the wealthy Martin Family. The Martins and the Moutons owned much of the land on which the town of Vermilionville was built in 1824.

A review of the history of the houses in the area shows that the pattern of life in them differed greatly from that in St. Mary Parish, for instance. And thus, it would be safe to say that because so many Acadians received Spanish patents to land in Lafayette Parish, the pattern of occupance by small independent farms was so firmly established that the antebellum plantation pattern was effectively discouraged. The original Spanish grants, modest in extent, were subdivided for generations among sons and daughters of successive inheritors. Although some few of the combined family holdings contained a couple of thousand acres in scattered sections, the individual holdings rarely exceeded a few hundred acres. The large sugar houses, the cotton gins, the rows of slave quarters that had come to be the distinguishing features of the southern plantation system did not exist in Lafayette Parish. This was so not because the land was not suited to the culture of cane or cotton, or because the means of transport to outside markets was lacking, but because so many of the inhabitants of the parish were proto-types of the original settlers. Frugal and content with simple pleasures, they lived clustered in family groups along the waterways.

Therefore, we may say in summary that, because so many Acadians were settled on small holdings in the area of the Attakapas that in 1844 became the present Parish of Lafayette, this parish remained a parish of small independent farmers. In his new home, the basic character of the Acadian had only served to perpetuate his traditional patterns of living, a simple combination of agrarian and pastoral pursuits, the labor for which was provided in great part by his own hands. The Spanish Patent Law which kept the size of his original holdings small did nothing to discourage his natural bent.

Notes

1. Alcée Fortier, *A History of Louisiana* (New York: Manzi, Joyant and Co., 1904), I, 243-244.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 244-245.

3. *American State Papers. Public Lands* (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1834), III, pp. 130, 173, 191.

4. François-Xavier Martin, *The History of Louisiana From the Earliest Period* (New Orleans: James A. Gresham, 1882), pp. 206, 213.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 213.

6. *American State Papers. Public Lands,* III. The names listed are scattered throughout the volume.

7. William Darby, *A Geographical Description of the State of Louisiana* (Philadelphia: John Melish, 1816), pp. 110, 111, 113.

8. Frederick Law Olmstead, *Journey in the Seaboard Slave States* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904), II, 305.

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THE FORBIDDING ATCHAFALAYA BASIN

By Louise Callan

When Philippine set out on this mission of charity, she little dreamed of the adventurous journey that lay ahead. Nor could she realize how fascinating an account her letters would make. When she is her own biographer, the pages come alive with her vigorous personality, and the story glows with her own animation. She had already visited Grand Coteau and was on her way to New Orleans to board a northbound steamboat when she wrote to Mother Barat from a dingy inn at Plaquemine, Louisiana, on September 8:

> On July 29 we left the river boat and waited at an inn at Plaquemine for a chance to board the bayou steamboat, which was undergoing repairs. We spent seven days there at 20 francs a day, besides 60 francs for transportation three leagues to where the steamboat was. Then we had to pay 35 francs apiece to travel for 24 hours on that boat. We had hoped to reach the landing in it, but the receding waters had left the place so miry, the oxen could not be driven into it. So the boatmen decided to transfer us and our baggage to a small boat that cost us 50 francs to travel four leagues on another little bayou which, they said, would bring us to dry land. As the captain considered this a good plan, I thought it best to do what these men who knew the country advised, so we got into the canoe. The men at the oars were soon pretty tired, and from the second little bayou we passed into a third.
>
> You can form some idea of the place we were in if you recall the descriptions of the waters surrounding Tartarus. The water was black and evil-smelling. As far as the eye could see, it flowed through the most dismal forests which stand in water all but one or two months of the year. The trees have only a little dark foliage high up near their tops, and this is almost hidden under the long gray beards that hang from every branch of these old trees. (This hanging moss is a parasitic plant; when dried and beaten, it becomes a kind of fiber from which the countryfolk make mattresses.) The further we advanced, the denser the forest became; but there was no dry land in sight, not even a sign of it. The day wore on. We had only a little bread to feed the eight people in the boat. I said to the guide, «I think you have lost your way. Would it not be more prudent to turn back and find a place where there is dry

land, no matter where?» He replied that that was impossible, and his embarrassed manner convinced me that we were lost in the swamp. Just then we heard shouting. «Listen,» he said, «they are calling from the bank to tell us they are waiting for us.» I answered, «But notice, the shouts are coming from a very different direction.»

At that same moment we saw coming rapidly from behind us a canoe filled with Indians, Negroes, and whites, mostly naked except for loin cloths, the most frightful looking men, yelling and whistling as they are represented when rushing to an assured victory. Our boatmen grew pale and not one of them would have been able to put up any resistance. My three young companions were terrified, though they never dreamed of dangers as great as I was picturing to myself. I told them to pray earnestly to God and place themselves under the protection of the Blessed Virgin, and I immediately promised a novena of Masses in return for our safety. The canoe was already upon us. The savages stared at us as if petrified, then passed by, after having stopped some time close beside us. They eyed our water bottles, which they thought were filled with the liquor they are so crazy about. They seemed to have nothing to eat with them, yet they left us without asking for anything. I thought they had passed us by just to go ahead and wait for us at a place where they could attack us more easily, so I gave myself up to prayer, recommending my soul to God in preparation for death, but to my companions I only suggested prayer and patience. As the boatmen were exhausted with rowing, I feared my complaints might annoy them.

At last, just when I was positive we were lost in the swamp, dry land suddenly appeared, and we saw a cart drawn by four oxen waiting for us. It was like a resurrection – I really was not ready to die. I shall never forget the names of those animals: *Flambeau, Rousseau, Gaillard, Tout-Blanc* – the words rang through the woods every minute, for the driver had to urge them on continually over the muddy ground. We spent the night at an inn, where a few days before all this the travelers staying there had been robbed. But we were quite safe. At two o'clock in the morning we set out again in a cart and at nine o'clock [on August 7] reached the convent of the Sacred Heart. Father Rossi, pastor of another parish in the Opelousas district, was just leaving. He continued to say Mass for us twice a week while I was there, as the priest whom Monseigneur has named to serve as chaplain had not arrived. I have had no news from either France or St. Louis. Letters ordinarily take six weeks to reach here from St. Louis. I asked Mother Octavie to hold at Florissant any that might come during my absence, as I thought they would not reach me at Opelousas . . .

THE BATTLE OF BAYOU QUEUE-TORTUE

By Alexandre Barde

Le 3 septembre était arrivé.

Dès quatre heures du matin, heure convenue pour commencer le mouvement, le major St-Julien traversait le pont Vermillon, à la tête de cent vingt hommes armés jusqu'aux dents et pleins d'enthousiasme.

Le silence régnait dans les rangs; les premières lueurs du soleil commençaient à peine à mettre en lumière les canons de fusils et de revolvers.

A cinq heures du matin, ce magnifique détachement de cavalerie laissait derrière lui la belle avenue *Crow* et passait dans les rues de Vermillonville, sans y faire halte; puis, marchant fraternellement et côte à côte avec le Comité de Vermillonville, au grand complet, il se dirigeait, à cinq milles plus loin, vers l'habitation Térence Béguenaud, où devait se faire la jonction les Vigilants de Lafayette et de St-Martin.

Ils arrivaient de tous les côtés, nombreux, ardents, et faisant étinceler au soleil levant leurs armes luisantes.

Hommes et chevaux, tous semblaient appeler la lutte. On eût dit le prologue d'un de ces drames sanglants où va se jouer un empire. Dans ce pays aux passions brûlantes comme le soleil, jamais tant d'enthousiasme n'avait régné.

M. Alfred Mouton, ex-élève de West-Point, et qui avait le commandement pendant la journée, passa une revue rapide de ces flots de soldats arrivant de tous les côtés.

Tous les Comités de cette partie du pays étaient venus en nombre; plusieurs avaient aussi leurs cadres au grand complet.

Le commandant compta ses hommes et sourit. L'empressement de ceux-ci lui faisait bien augurer de ceux qu'on devait encore rencontrer avant d'arriver à la maison Lagrange.

En moins d'un quart d'heure, sept Comités s'étaient ralliés:

Côte-Gelée. . .capitaine	Major St-Julien.
Vermillonville	Alfred Mouton.
Saint-Martin	D. Béraud
Pointe	L. Savoie.
Pont-Braux . .capitaine	Béguenaud.
Grande-Pointe	Domingeau.
Anse-à-la-Butte	Dupré-Patin.

On forma immédiatement trois colonnes:

Gauche, – Côte-Gelée.
Centre, – Vermillonville.
Droite, – Pointe, Pont-Braux, Grande-

Pointe, Anse-à-la-Butte.

Saint-Martin, n'étant pas assez nombreux, s'était fondu dans le Comité de Vermillonville et devait faire la campagne avec lui.

Le canon fut placé entre le centre et la droite qui s'enfermèrent aussitôt dans une double haie de baïonnettes.

A cheval sur ce canon, – brillant comme s'il ne fût sorti que la veille de l'arsenal de Bâton-Rouge, – à cheval sur ce canon, on remarquait une espèce de gnôme, d'être fantastique, comme il y en avait dans tous les châteaux du Moyen-Age, sans doute pour rappeler Satan aux mondaines châtelaines: c'était Georges Reiner, un Anglais fait prisonnier le 8 Janvier et établi, depuis cette époque, dans le pays. Georges est depuis vingt ans l'artilleur de toutes les fêtes publiques de la paroisse Lafayette. Il aime son canon comme Quasimodo les cloches de Notre-Dame et ce n'est pas la seule ressemblance qu'il ait avec le sonneur de cloches créé par le grand poète. Il avait demandé et obtenu l'honneur d'accompagner sa chère pièce au combat.

Le signal du départ fut donné.

Et, comme on entrait en pays ennemi, on lança des avant-gardes et l'on se couvrit d'éclaireurs qui servirent de trait d'union aux trois colonnes qui allaient opérer leur mouvement en avant à deux milles de distance les unes des autres.

Bien que la matinée fût peu avancée, le ciel était un peu orageux; au loin, on entendait les vagues et sourdes détonations du tonnerre. La chaleur commençait à être intense.

C'était un cadre digne du tableau héroï-comique qui allait être signé par sept à huit cents artistes.

La prairie où l'on entrait est une de ces rares savanes louisianaises qui disparaissent tous les jours hélas! sous la charrue impitoyable de l'agriculteur.

C'est la dernière poésie du pays qui s'en va avec ces savanes; mais qu'y faire? L'homme est un rapin qui mutile depuis six mille ans les toiles du Grand Peintre. Si M. Rouquette était venu au monde cinquante ans plus tard, les modèles lui auraient manqué et il n'aurait point écrit ses chères *Savanes*.

Cette prairie, une des dernières qui nous restent, est un de ces immenses théâtres de verdure que les généraux choisissaient pour ces immenses chocs d'hommes qu'on vit tant de fois sous Napoléon.

D'une largeur de plusieurs lieues, s'étendant en longueur jusqu'à la mer, on dirait une page du Far-West jetée dans un coin de cette paroisse. Point d'arbres; point de bayous; rien que la mer de verdure flottante. Si elle avait les débris de quelque tribu indienne, on repasserait, en la voyant, la *Prairie* et le *Trapper* de Cooper. Quelques petites coulées, quelques modestes platins, raient de leurs lignes noirâtres cet océan de verdure aux lignes infinies.

Quelques rares maisons – *rari nantes* – jettent timidement leurs silhouettes à l'ombre de quelque arbre isolé venu à la grâce de Dieu dans un coin de cette prairie immense.

C'est là que les Comités s'étaient engagés.

A neuf heures du matin eut lieu une halte générale.

Les hommes se désaltérèrent.

Le soleil était brûlant.

La marche reprise, la colonne de gauche

rencontra les cavaliers du Comité Foreman qui, leur capitaine en tête, s'étaient faits, depuis le matin, batteurs d'estrade, et n'avaient cessé d'observer l'ennemi en décrivant autour de la maison Lagrange de nombreuses ellipses.

Ces cavaliers, presque tous vaqueros, étaient tous des hommes d'action et de véritables centaures. Arrivés les premiers sur le terrain ils se seraient engagés sans attendre leurs camarades . . . Heureusement, l'ennemi n'avait pas fait de sortie.

Le Comité de Vermillon, capitaine Sarrazin Broussard, avait aussi rallié les cavaliers de Foreman et s'était fondu avec eux.

Cette compagnie de cavalerie forma une quatrième colonne à l'extrême gauche.

La marche en avant continua dans la direction du nord-ouest, où l'on devait rencontrer les comités de St-Landry et Calcassieu.

Dans quelques maisons qu'on trouvait, comme des sentinelles perdues, dans cette prairie immense, les femmes et les enfants, montés sur les toits, jetaient de longs regards de curiosité sur ces longues lignes de cavaliers et sur leurs armes étincelantes. Dans ces maisons, point d'hommes; ils étaient tous sous les drapeaux de John Jones.

Les Comités marchaient toujours.

Nous avons dit que l'on marchait vers le nord-ouest, en laissant à gauche la maison Lagrange, afin de rallier les colonnes de Saint-Landry et Calcassieu.

Le point choisi pour cette dernière halte était précisément la maison de John Jones, — de celui-là même qui avait donné son nom à un mouvement où lui et ses compagnons allaient être brisés comme des roseaux! . . .

Dans cette prairie large, plane, comme une zone saharienne, on avait déjà aperçu quelques cavaliers armés se rendant, isolés ou par groupes de trois ou quatre, à la maison Lagrange.

On leur avait fait une chasse éperdue, ardente, et deux d'entre eux étaient même tombés au pouvoir de deux Vigilants de la Côte-Gelée, Raphaël Lachaussée et Charles Comeau qui, au moment de les atteindre, leur avaient crié: *Rendez-vous, ou vous êtes morts!*

Ils avaient jeté leurs armes, — ce qui veut dire qu'ils avaient voulu vivre.

Les Comités marchaient toujours.

Bientôt on découvrit, à droite, une centaine d'hommes armés qui semblaient campés le long de la barrière d'un clos. On détacha un piquet de cavalerie pour reconnaître si ce rassemblement était ami ou ennemi.

Avis avait été donné en même temps aux autres colonnes que la droite avait devant elle un corps armé dont on ignorait le drapeau.

Le centre s'était aussitôt hâté d'accourir pour renforcer la droite, si besoin était.

Cependant, le piquet envoyé en reconnaissance s'était rapproché du rassemblement inconnu, et celui qui commandait, arrivé à vingt pas, avait crié:

«Qui vive? Qui êtes-vous?

— Comités de Vigilance! avaient répondu les autres.

— Lesquels?

— Prairie-Robert! Fakataïque!»

Alors les mains et les voix avaient échangé des poignées de mains et des paroles amicales et l'on avait informé promptement nos colonnes anxieuses que le corps que l'on venait de reconnaître était composé d'auxiliaires et d'amis.

Prairie-Robert et Fakataïque étaient en effet les deux corps attendus pour prendre part à l'attaque de la maison Lagrange. Ils avaient fait sept prisonniers qu'ils avaient trouvés armés de revolvers et de fusils portant d'énormes charges, et les poches bourrées de postes et de cartouches et qui, interrogés sur ce qu'ils voulaient faire de leurs munitions et de leurs armes, avaient répondu qu'ils voulaient faire une chasse à la *papabotte*.

Quelques jeunes gens de Calcassieu s'étaient joints à cette vaillante troupe commandée par les capitaines Stanton et Maggy.

Dès ce moment, tous les Comités se trouvant au complet, on commença le dernier mouvement, le mouvement décisif, la marche sur la maison Lagrange.

Entre elle et les Comités, il y avait une distance de deux milles et demi à trois milles.

L'expédition comptait environ six cents cavaliers. Cette dernière étape serait donc vite franchie.

Dans toutes les poitrines, il y avait ardeur et espoir. Si nombreuse que fût la bande de Jones, si forte que fût sa citadelle, il ne lui restait guère d'autre alternative que d'être broyée, soit dans un combat dont l'issue ne pouvait être douteuse, soit dans une défaite qui, si elle avait coûté une blessure ou une vie aux Vigilants, aurait exposé les vaincus à des représailles qui seraient restées à l'état de légende dans l'histoire attakapienne . . .

On fut bientôt en vue de la maison Lagrange.

A un mille et demi environ, un des chefs de l'expédition braqua une longue-vue sur le quartier-général de cette insurrection lépreuse, et contempla longtemps le spectacle qui semblait danser au bout de sa lunette.

Bien que des nuages cuivrés voilassent le soleil, la maison Lagrange n'en découpait pas moins, dans un ciel assez lumineux, son toit ainsi que ceux de sa cuisine et de son magasin.

Les uns et les autres fourmillaient d'hommes armés qui interrogeaient la partie de la prairie que commençaient à rayer les colonnes vigilantes.

La cour regorgeait aussi d'hommes allant, venant et échangeant avec ceux qui étaient perchés sur les toits des paroles et des gestes — gestes qui traduisaient les paroles au lointain observateur de ce spectacle étrange.

Plusieurs chefs prirent à leur tour la longue-vue et observèrent cette fourmilière humaine qui semblait peu à peu disparaître et rentrer sous terre à mesure qu'approchaient les colonnes assaillantes.

Enfin les Comités arrivèrent à deux cents mètres de la maison Lagrange et s'arrêtèrent.

Le moment suprême et désiré de tous était venu.

Cette maison était bien telle que l'avaient dépeinte les batteurs d'estrade des Comités.

Comme sa cuisine et son magasin, elle faisait face à la coulée de la Queue-Tortue, distante à peine de quelques mètres, et se montrait toute marquetée de créneaux, du rez-de-chaussée au pignon. On l'avait aussi délattée sur ses quatre faces, à hauteur de ceinture d'homme. Les autres édifices montraient aussi leurs créneaux comme autant de bouches béantes.

Dans la cour, quelques lilas étendaient les panaches verts de leurs branches.

Dans un coin, était un monceau de pieux, sur lequel s'était hissé, à l'approche des colonnes, un individu qui, battant des ailes, avait imité le chant du coq et s'était ensuite, non replongé dans la foule qui disparaissait peu à peu comme dans des trappes de théâtre, mais caché sous ces mêmes pieux où il devait être pris et fouetté quelques heures plus tard.

La maison fut d'abord investie avec une rapidité remarquable.

Fakataïque et Prairie-Robert reçurent l'ordre de se porter à l'ouest à l'entrée du bois qui offrirait des moyens de fuite faciles aux bandits, s'ils essuyaient une défaite.

Un officier énergique et intelligent de Vermillon, M. E. Maux, fut chargé de traverser la coulée à l'est afin de prêter la main à ce corps avec ses cavaliers.

Puis la pièce de six fut placée ostensiblement en batterie à deux cents mètres et braquée sur la maison qui s'était hérissée de fusils à toutes les ouvertures et à tous les créneaux.

Ensuite, à côté de la pièce on alluma du feu. Ce feu fut allumé lentement . . . lentement . . . comme pour laisser à l'ennemi le temps de savourer ce prélude de la canonnade.

Quand le feu flamba, Georges Reiner approcha de la flamme une mèche blanche qui se couronna bientôt d'une fumée bleuâtre.

Et comme il approchait cette mèche fumante de la pièce, après lui avoir fait décrire dans les airs un gracieux demi-cercle . . .

Un cri de terreur partit de la cour ennemie où était massée une partie de la bande et chacun d'eux s'empressa de disparaître derrière les édifices ou de gagner le bois à travers la coulée de la Queue-Tortue, coulée qui avait peu d'eau à cette époque et qui, du reste, est guéable à toutes les époques de l'année.

A ce cri et à cette fuite, Georges baissa sa mèche et attendit de nouveaux ordres.

On poursuivait déjà ceux qui avaient donné le signal de la fuite . . . on entendait crier poursuivants et poursuivies . . . parfois retentissaient dans les bois des détonations isolées . . .

Le gros de l'armée de John Jones était encore retranché dans les édifices de la maison.

C'est alors que le gouverneur Mouton, qui était venu en voiture jusque sur le terrain, mais qui, le moment de l'action venu, était monté à cheval comme les autres chefs – c'est alors, disons-nous, que le gouverneur Mouton appela le major St-Julien et M. Valmont Richard (du Comité de Saint-Martin).

«Suivez-moi, messieurs, leur dit-il. Epargnons le sang, s'il est possible. Allons parler à ces gens-là.»

Un quatrième, M. Steack, se joignit spontanément à eux et le groupe de cavaliers se dirigea, sans armes, vers la maison; – où, pour être plus conforme à la vérité, le Gouverneur était armé d'un parasol; le Major de sa longue-vue; et MM. Richard et Steack . . . de leurs chapeaux que, pour le moment, ils avaient changés en éventails.

A moins de s'appeler le *Roi d'Yvetot*, il était impossible d'avoir un extérieur plus pacifique que ces messieurs.

Ils descendirent avec un sang-froid tout romain à la barrière.

John Jones et Emilien Lagrange se présentèrent, et alors eut lieu le dialogue suivant, qui nous a été répété et analysé par un des acteurs de cette scène.

«Que désirez-vous, messieurs? demanda le premier.

– Nous informer de ce qui se passe aujourd'hui ici, répondit le Gouverneur.

– Nous avons une réunion politique.

– Une réunion politique? . . . Mais nous ne sommes à la veille d'aucune élection générale ni particulière; mais à une réunion politique on n'apporte pas de fusils, – et vous avez des fusils! et même des canons peut-être! N'avez-vous pas quelque part des amis qui vous en auraient promis un ou deux pour cette fête? Vous dites *non* de la tête, je veux bien le croire. La chronique le dit pourtant.

– Nous ne sommes pas assez riches pour avoir des canons, répartit Jones avec amertume.

– Soit; mais vous avez des fusils . . . beaucoup de fusils, des cartouches, des munitions de guerre de toute espèce. C'est toujours la chronique qui le dit, et cette fois elle a dû dire vrai.

– Nous n'avons que cinq ou six fusils apportés, soit pour tirer des salves à notre réunion, soit pour chasser à la *papabotte*.

– Nous nous sommes réunis, interrompit Lagrange, parce que le droit de réunion est sacré, et que nous sommes blancs et libres.

– Tout beau, monsieur Lagrange, fit le Gouverneur avec une dignité suprême; je suis venu à vous, non pour discuter, mais pour interroger, et même pour sommer. Vous avez chez vous, dans vos rangs, Olivier Guidry dit *Nain Canada*, ses deux fils Ernest et Geneus Guidry, et son neveu Onézime Guidry, bannis par mon Comité et que mon Comité veut reprendre et châtier. Voulez-vous les livrer ou les défendre?

– Nous ne connaissons pas ces hommes, fit Jones.

– C'est bien; nous saurons bien les trouver et les arrêter nous-mêmes. Une dernière question: Vous avez des fusils. Voulez-vous combattre ou les remettre?»

Et comme Jones répondait évasivement à ces demandes catégoriques:

«Gouverneur, dit le Major, nous sommes venus ici pour échanger, non des paroles oiseuses, mais des balles. Puisqu'ils refusent de vous rendre *vos* bannis et *leurs* armes, retournons à notre poste, et commençons le combat.»

Le Gouverneur fit un geste d'assentiment, et avisant à quelques pas de lui, la concubine de Lagrange qui, un enfant dans les bras, était spectatrice de cette scène:

«Messieurs, dit-il à Jones et à Lagrange, nous ne voulons faire la guerre ni aux femmes, ni aux enfants. La place de cette femme et de cet enfant n'est donc pas ici. Si vous voulez les éloigner de cette maison qui peut-être dans une minute sera un champ de bataille, je vais leur donner une escorte de mes Vigilants qui les mènera dans tel lieu qu'il vous plaira de me désigner – et qui les respectera, je vous en réponds sur ma tête.»

En ce moment, Jones rentra dans la maison et en ressortit avec une demi-douzaine de fusils qu'il déposa debout contre la barrière.

«Vous devez en avoir encore, cherchez;» dirent ceux qui avaient partagé la périlleuse mission du gouverneur Mouton. Nous disons *périlleuse*, car pendant que ce groupe d'hommes de cœur s'entretenaient avec Lagrange et Jones, sans autres armes que leur titre sacré de parlementaires, un des bannis réclamés par M. Mouton avait passé son fusil à travers un des créneaux et l'avait mis trois fois en joue. Heureusement ses compagnons, mieux instruits que lui des conséquences de cette violation des lois de la guerre, avaient trois fois détourné cette arme prête à tuer . . .

Aussitôt que Jones avait remis ses premiers fusils, le Gouverneur avait envoyé requérir vingt-quatre Vigilants qui auraient la mission de veiller au désarmement général.

L'envoyé rejoignit le Comité au moment où MM. Alfred Mouton et le colonel Creighton (qui firent preuve durant cette journée d'un zèle au-dessus de tout éloge), allaient envoyer des détachements de vingt-quatre hommes par Comité, au secours des quatre parlementaires qu'ils croyaient en danger. Leur joie fut vive en apprenant le dénouement de ce drame où les Vigilants n'avaient accepté un rôle que sous le coup d'une nécessité de *salut public*. La cause de l'ordre allait donc être gagnée sans qu'elle eût fait verser une goutte de sang.

Pendant que l'envoyé des parlementaires remplissait sa mission, ceux-ci assistaient à la remise des fusils.

Une quinzaine environ avaient été disposés à leurs pieds, lorsque dans la cour et dans les édifices se firent entendre de sourds murmures de désapprobation. Chez eux qui apportaient les armes, il y eut aussi hésitation, tiraillement.

Le Major saisit de l'œil ce tiraillement, de l'oreille ces murmures. Se tournant vers ses adversaires et les regardant avec mépris:

«Reprenez vos fusils et acceptez le combat, leur cria-t-il, ou rendez-vous à discrétion!»

Ce mot parfaitement historique, comme tous les détails de ces scènes, fit cesser toute hésitation. Sur ces entrefaites, les vingt-quatre hommes demandés entrèrent en bon ordre dans la cour . . . pendant que deux cents têtes de Vigilants apparaissaient à toutes les barrières.

Le poème héroï-comique touchait décidément à son dénouement.

Ce fut alors une de ces scènes excentriques qui auraient tenté le pinceau d'un peintre fantaisiste . . . si dans les rangs des Comités il y avait eu un peintre . . .

Il n'y en avait pas . . .

La fuite avait commencé; la fuite folle, effarée; la fuite avec toutes ses vertigineuses terreurs.

Tous ces courages, qui avaient failli à l'heure du combat, semblaient avoir des ailes aux pieds comme certains dieux mythologiques, et dévoraient le sol comme ces coureurs impossibles, surhumains, que nous avons tous vu passer quelquefois dans nos rêves.

Le bois ouvrait ses profondeurs aux fuyards . . . le bois couvert et sillonné dans tous les sens de patrouilles vigilantes.

Les édifices de la maison Lagrange avaient en vain ouvert eux-mêmes tous leurs asiles.

On se cachait ou l'on se laissait emporter par la pire des fuites, la fuite sans espoir!

Etudions d'abord les scènes de la maison.

Là, des insurgés étaient entassés. Le grenier en regorgeait; on en retirait sept de dessous un lit.

Sous un autre lit, c'était une vaste manne d'osier, recouverte de coton, et renfermant plusieurs milliers de cartouches.

Entre les matelas d'un autre lit, c'était le drapeau fait par la concubine de Lagrange et Mlle Valette, sa fille, pour couvrir le triomphe de l'insurrection et qui ne couvrait, hélas! que sa défaite – et une défaite désastreuse!

Ce drapeau fut découvert par Raphaël Lachaussée (Côte-Gelée).

Et à chaque pas, c'était une découverte et une trouvaille!

Ici, des couteaux bowie-knives!

Là, des revolvers!

Et des postes!

Et des balles!

Et des lingots!

Et tout ce qui peut déchirer! et tuer! et broyer!

Et à chaque instant, c'étaient un, deux, trois prisonniers qu'on arrachait des tanières peu discrètes qu'ils avaient cru être des asiles, et qui venaient grossir le nombre de ceux qui, déjà prisonniers des Vigilants, étaient gardés, dans la cour de la maison Lagrange, par un fort détachement.

Pendant ces scènes de confusion et de désordre indicibles, il s'accomplissait un drame, le seul qui ait assombri cette journée si heureuse pour la cause de l'ordre.

Un des bannis les plus dangereux, par sa résolution et son audace, et dont l'arrestation avait été demandée par le gouverneur Mouton, sur lequel il avait levé son fusil à trois reprises, Geneus Guidry, voyant la cause de l'insurrection perdue, s'était réfugié derrière le magasin fortifié, dans un carré de barrière protégeant des berges de foin.

Un Vigilant du Carancro l'avait vu se réfugier dans cet asile qui ne devait pas être plus protecteur que les autres, et croyant que son courage, à lui, était au moins à la hauteur de celui de Geneus Guidry, il s'était juré à lui-même de l'arrêter, dût-il jouer dix fois sa vie. Ce Vigilant, d'une des meilleures familles de la paroisse Lafayette, était un jeune homme d'une force athlétique et d'un courage à la hauteur de sa force physique: il s'appelait J. L. F. Tréville Bernard.

Insoucieux du danger que pouvait présenter cette arrestation, certain de pouvoir réduire G. Guidry à l'impuissance de nuire s'il pouvait le saisir avec ses mains herculéennes, il avait généreusement refusé de faire usage des armes qui hérissaient sa ceinture; ce qu'il voulait, c'était, non le cadavre de Geneus, mais Geneus vivant. Séparé de lui par une barrière, il se disposait à la franchir d'un bond, qui lui aurait fait perdre environ une demi-seconde, lorsqu'un coup de pistolet retentit et Geneus s'affaissa sur lui-même; c'était une balle suicide qu'il venait de se tirer dans l'oreille. Tombé, mais encore maître de lui, il se frappa à la gorge avec son poignard à plusieurs reprises. Il râla ensuite quelques minutes et mourut.

Fouillé après sa mort, on trouva dans ses poches une fiole de poison, – qui fut remise au docteur Francès, le médecin de l'expédition, – un couteau poignard et un revolver.

Ainsi mourut Geneus, la seule victime de la journée. Déjà banni par un Comité, coupable de la violation d'une des lois les plus sacrées de la guerre, le respect des parlementaires, il désespéra d'obtenir une grâce, qu'on lui aurait peut-être accordée sans qu'il la demandât lui-même, et de peur de subir une mort honteuse, il se donna lui-même la mort.

Dans la fin de Geneus, quelques personnes virent du stoïcisme. Le stoïcisme est mort avec le Paganisme. Folie, remords, scepticisme, crainte du déshonneur, tels sont les mots qu'on pourrait lire sur le front de tous les suicides du Catholicisme. La Croix a tué les morts stoïques de l'antiquité.

Dans le bois, c'était aussi, comme autour de la maison, une poursuite acharnée, impitoyable des uns; une fuite échevelée de la part des autres.

Si les Vigilants chargeaient impitoyablement tout fugitif qui essayait vainement d'échapper à ceux qui s'attachaient à sa poursuite, les vaincus profitaient, de leur côté, de tous les plis de terrain, de toutes les cachettes qui pouvaient les rendre invisibles à leurs vainqueurs.

Il y en eut qui se cachèrent non sur des branches d'arbre, comme Charles-Edouard d'Angleterre, mais dans des troncs creux où ils pouvaient peut-être se heurter à des serpents ou à quelque essaim d'abeilles . . .

D'autres cherchèrent les roncières les plus touffues et s'y déclarèrent, habits et chair, aux milliers d'épines qui les firent saigner à chaque pas comme les pointes d'un cilice.

On rapporte même que dans une de ces roncières, où sept individus étaient déjà réfugiés, il s'en glissa un huitième, mais sans bruit, sournoisement, comme aurait pu faire un serpent, si un serpent n'avait pas cherché les abris les plus profonds devant le tohu-bohu de cette journée.

En entendant le bruit, à peine perceptible, que faisait cet homme en déplaçant les ronces, les sept individus crurent à l'intervention mystérieuse de quelque Vigilant et allèrent se réfugier ailleurs en lui laissant la roncière libre.

Ce Vigilant était un des leurs qui, comme eux, essayait d'échapper à la poursuite des Comités.

Ce malheureux resta toute la journée enfoui sous les ronces, entendit peut-être *l'autre* bruit – celui du fouet – qui devait bientôt succéder au tumulte résultant de la poursuite, et monta, dit-on, le soir, sur un cheval qui, ardent comme celui de Mazeppa, l'emporta dans la direction de la Sabine, ce refuge de tant d'épaves sociales.

Cette chasse aux vaincus aurait présenté des difficultés insurmontables à toute autre troupe que les poursuivants. A chaque pas, ils trouvaient fossés, flaques d'eau, troncs d'arbres renversés, branches brisées par l'ouragan et se dressant devant la cavalerie, plus infranchissables que les barricades parisiennes le jour où se font les révolutions.

Rien n'arrêta le torrent. Les poursuivants atteignirent tout ce qu'ils virent; les fuyards, de leur côté, mirent à profit leur connaissance parfaite du terrain et s'échappèrent en grand nombre.

Adolphe Comeau (Côte-Gelée) et Lebleu de Comarsac (Prairie-Robert), montés, l'un sur un excellent cheval, l'autre sur un mulet mexicain, firent des prisonniers dans les circonstances suivantes:

Ils avaient devant eux plusieurs fuyards armés, avec lesquels, après d'inutiles sommations, ils avaient échangé des coups de fusil sans succès. La poursuite n'en continua pas moins et lorsqu'ils furent à portée de la voix:

«Rendez-vous!» leur crièrent les deux jeunes gens qui n'avaient plus de coups de feu à tirer, tandis que les autres en avaient encore.

Les fuyards s'arrêtèrent.

«Déposez vos fusils, là!» ajoutèrent-ils en désignant un arbre qui se trouvait à quelques pas.

Les fusils furent déposés au lieu indiqué et leurs possesseurs amenés prisonniers.

Ce trait de courage ne fut du reste pas le seul.

Comme les colonnes des Comités arrivaient devant la maison Lagrange, le cheval de Louis Beer, premier servant de la pièce de canon, s'échappa et alla donner du front contre la barrière de cette maison en ce moment hérissée de fusils. Un membre du Comité Prairie-Robert, grand et brun, dont nous regrettons de ne pas savoir le nom, s'élança seul et au galop, vers le cheval qui semblait vouloir déserter à l'ennemi, comme Bourmont la veille de la suprême bataille de l'Empire et le ramena triomphalement à son maître en murmurant:

«Quant à eux, ils ne l'auront pas!»

D'autres épisodes avaient marqué cette journée déjà si accidentée.

Au moment où le sauve-qui-peut commençait, on avait vu arriver, du large, à toute course de cheval, un mulâtre qui était venu se jeter étourdiment dans le gros des Comités.

«Au nom de qui viens-tu? Que viens-tu faire ici? lui avait-on demandé.

– Je viens au nom de ma maîtresse, chercher des nouvelles de mon maître, M. Maximilien Leblanc. (Il était déjà lié et gardé à vue comme prisonnier.)

– Tu lui en rapporteras de fraîches,» lui avait-on répondu, et on l'avait fouetté.

Ce mulâtre, on le sut plus tard, venait chercher des nouvelles au nom d'une centaine d'hommes de la rivière Mermento, amenés par Jean-Baptiste Istre, qui s'étaient arrêtés, pour reprendre haleine et faire faire halte à leurs chevaux, à l'habitation Maximilien Leblanc dont le propriétaire, comme nous l'avons dit, était déjà prisonnier des Vigilants.

Le mulâtre fouetté s'en revint tristement à la maison d'où on l'avait envoyé.

«Quelles nouvelles?» lui demanda-t-on anxieusement lorsqu'on le vit apparaître à la porte.

Il descendit lentement . . . péniblement de cheval et . . . silencieux comme la statue du Commandeur, il se contenta de faire une réponse . . . en pantomime.

La réponse était trop éloquente pour ne pas être comprise en ce moment.

Là aussi, comme à la Queue-Tortue, commença une fuite échevelée.

Ils fuirent tous à travers champs, abandonnant armes, chevaux, équipements, munitions, tout ce qui devait les aider à marcher et à combattre.

Jamais plus vaste insurrection n'avait eu plus piètre dénouement.

Il était une heure de l'après-midi.

Nous l'avons déjà dit, la journée était brûlante; on était trempé de sueur; on souffrait, mais toutes les souffrances physiques s'effaçaient devant les résultats de la journée.

Quatre-vingts prisonniers, enfermés dans un carré de Vigilants; cinquante-sept fusils remis volontairement ou pris de force; une quantité d'armes semées dans les bois par les fuyards; une insurrection faite sur une vaste échelle et se dénouant par le plus misérable avortement, tel était le bilan de la journée.

Les Vigilants avaient le droit d'être contents.

Les prisonniers furent conduits, sous bonne garde, à deux cents mètres de la maison Lagrange, sous de grands arbres, à l'ombre desquels rôtissaient, comme aux temps homériques, les quartiers de trois bœufs, étendus sur des barres de fer, au-dessus de trois fournaises ardentes.

C'était le théâtre du dîner que les vaincus ne devaient pas manger.

D'un côté, les fourneaux primitifs que nous avons décrits; de l'autre, une tribune dressée – tribune qui sans doute attendait le Dr. Wagner, un orateur qui ne se présenterait pas . . .

C'est là que les prisonniers furent conduits, en attendant jugement, sous la garde des baïonnettes vigilantes.

Puis les colonnes expéditionnaires dînèrent. Chaque soldat avait reçu, la veille, l'ordre d'emporter pour deux jours de vivres. Chacun tira alors de sa valise les provisions qu'y avait placées la tendresse maternelle, conjugale ou fraternelle. On fit, en riant, un repas de Spartiates. – Mais l'eau? . . .

La température était brûlante et l'on avait beaucoup couru . . . et l'on n'avait pour se désaltérer que le puits de la maison Lagrange . . . puits immense qui contenait peut-être du poison et la mort. On haletait et, comme Tantale, on regardait ce puits dont l'eau était miroitante et limpide et semblait aller au devant de la coupe.

La concubine de Lagrange vit tous ces regards, toutes ces souffrances, toutes ces craintes, et mue par une de ces pensées délicates qui se trouvent chez la grande dame comme chez la femme déchue . . . elle envoya sa fille puiser de l'eau et en but ostensiblement.

L'expédition comprit . . . but . . . épuisa le puits en moins d'un quart-d'heure et alla ensuite étancher sa soif en disputant l'eau bourbeuse de la Queue-Tortue aux serpents . . . que la chaleur y avait accumulés par milliers.

Dans cette chronique à vol d'oiseau, nous avions oublié une figure sinistre dont nous avons tracé ailleurs la silhouette – silhouette qui est loin de rappeler celle de l'Antinoüs antique: nous voulons parler du Dr. Wagner.

A l'heure où l'insurrection se débandait, on l'avait vu près de la barrière de la maison Lagrange, désespéré sans doute de n'avoir pu remplir son rôle d'agent provocateur . . . puis il avait disparu.

Quand on se fut reconnu et compté, l'on demanda s'il était parmi les prisonniers . . .

Il y brillait par son absence, comme César au sénat de Rome.

On lança aussitôt un piquet de cavalerie à sa poursuite . . .

Les cavaliers revinrent, ayant fait *buisson creux*, comme on dit en termes de chasseur. Pour nous servir de l'expression de l'un de ces messieurs, *il avait brûlé les chemins*.

L'heure du jugement était venue.

Deux délégués par Comité composèrent le jury chargé de peser les hommes et les choses de l'insurrection.

Ils s'assirent à l'ombre d'un bouquet d'arbres comme des juges et appelèrent, un à un, les vaincus qui, toujours liés et entourés de baïonnettes vigilantes, entendirent sonner tristement *le quart-heure de Rabelais*.

Il y eut des confessions . . . d'horribles confessions. Aucun n'eut le courage de la discrétion. Tous livrèrent leurs mystères. Il y eut même comme une fièvre de dénonciations qui s'empara de ces très peu héroïques et très peu intéressantes victimes. Si les quelques hommes honorables qui, après cette journée, donnèrent quelques sympathies à cette boue sociale, avaient assisté aux interrogatoires, ils auraient senti, comme nous, dans leur cœur, le mépris succéder à la pitié.

Pourquoi, le lendemain du 3 Septembre, les Comités ne publièrent-ils pas ces révélations?

En condensant toutes les déclarations des prisonniers, on peut constater:

Que le mouvement qui venait d'avorter si misérablement avait un triple but:

L'invasion de la paroisse;

Le pillage;

La révolte des nègres.

Presque tous les prisonniers déclarèrent que:

Ils ne s'attendaient à avoir sur les bras que le Comité de Vermillonville – Comité qu'on leur avait représenté comme hostile aux pauvres et devrant les *balayer tous* (sic) *de la paroisse Lafayette*. (C'était une calomnie des meneurs de l'insurrection, contre laquelle nous n'avons pas besoin de protester.)

Que, s'ils avaient triomphé de ce Comité, ils devaient marcher sur Vermillonville, hisser leur pavillon sur l'église de ce village, éventrer les coffres-forts de MM. Alexandre et Emile Mouton, V. A. Martin, Gérassin Bernard, Latiolais, Camille Doucet, François D'Aigle, &c., &c., et en égorger les propriétaires.

Que ces chefs morts, ils devaient sonner le tocsin, appeler les nègres à la révolte et incendier les habitations.

Que les cartouches trouvées dans la maison Lagrange, avaient été faites par un ancien soldat de l'armée d'Afrique, colporteur qui mangeait chaque jour le pain des habitants de la paroisse Lafayette et qui depuis y a fait proscrire le colportage, et que cet homme se nommait Klein.

Devant de pareilles déclarations, la tâche du jury devenait facile; aussi les honnêtes gens qui le composaient se mirent-ils à délibérer.

Il y avait un crime à punir.

Le pire des crimes, une prise d'armes contre la société avec un drapeau portant ces trois mots: Invasion de la Paroisse! Pillage et Massacre! Révolte des Nègres!

Ce crime demandait un châtiment exemplaire.

Quel serait ce châtiment?

Les Comités ne pouvaient assumer sur eux de noyer dans le sang des vaincus une victoire qui ne leur avait point été disputée. Recourir aux moyens sommaires et terribles employés si souvent par les Comités texiens, c'eût été se faire traduire au tribunal du monde civilisé, et se faire flétrir du titre peu enviable de bourreau. Les jurés pesèrent et comprirent toutes ces raisons et froidement, sans passion, impassibles comme des juges, ils décrétèrent avec douleur, mais en s'inclinant devant la nécessité, le supplice du fouet et l'exil dans cinq jours.

Le Dr. Wagner, principal acteur de cette journée à laquelle il s'était dérobé par la fuite, fut aussi condamné au châtiment réservé aux capitaines, et le reçut, le lundi suivant, de la main des cavaliers de l'énergique Sarrazin Broussard.

Le supplice du fouet fut infligé.

Non à outrance, comme l'ont dit certains journaux qui ont puisé leurs renseignements à une source impure.

Le châtiment fut mesuré à l'outrage. Malgré l'enivrement de la victoire, chacun fut jugé selon la part qu'il avait prise au drame qui venait de se jouer.

Le chef de cette peu héroïque insurrection subit le supplice du fouet le premier.

Ses lieutenants *Emilien Lagrange, Jinkins, Istre* et deux autres comparses, reçurent ensuite, comme leur chef, 120 coups de fouet.

Une seconde catégorie de condamnés en reçut 40.

Une troisième, 20.

Y eut-il chez ces Catilinas de bas étage un de ces cris d'indignation, une de ces explosions de l'âme qui vont au cœur de ceux qui en sont témoins? Non. Plus d'un soldat des Comités attendit un de ces cris, une de ces explosions, pour se jeter entre les exécuteurs et les *martyrs* et demander aux uns la grâce des autres . . . Tous reçurent le fouet, non comme un châtiment infamant, mais comme une torture physique. Les coups furent comptés par eux, non comme une flétrissure à l'honneur, mais comme un amende de guerre imposée à leurs corps . . . Nous nous trompons: un seul demanda la mort -- et nous soumettons ce fait à ceux qui aiment à étudier les mystères du cœur humain: ce cri fut poussé par un des bandits les plus compromis.

Il était six heures du soir.

La tâche des Comités était finie.

Les 500 soldats de l'ordre remontèrent à cheval et s'éloignèrent, après avoir remis en liberté leurs prisonniers.

Ils venaient d'étouffer une insurrection, sans avoir répandu une goutte de sang et de délivrer leurs paroisses de bandits que la loi n'avait jamais eu la puissance de réprimer.

La prairie était déserte; il n'y avait plus qu'un cadavre: celui de *Geneus Canada*, qui, le matin, se voyant poursuivi, s'était fait sauter la cervelle. (La véridique *Bannière des Planteurs* l'a fait mourir par la main des Comités; nous lui répondons que les *thugs*, que son parti soudoyait, il y a quatre ans, en ville, n'ont jamais fait école aux Attakapas.)

Les Comités s'empressèrent de regagner leurs foyers où veillaient des mères, des sœurs, des femmes inquiètes, et de relever en même temps les patrouilles armées que la prudence des chefs avait placées sur tous les chemins. Ces patrouilles avaient reçu la consigne d'arrêter tout inconnu qui serait rencontré, durant la nuit du 3 septembre, sur les chemins attakapiens. La crainte d'une diversion probable, sinon certaine, des bandits, diversion qui se serait traduite au moins par des incendies, avait dicté cette consigne sévère, qui du reste ne fut appliquée qu'à deux fuyards de l'armée de John Jones qui, ne voulant pas s'arrêter, furent salués de deux balles, qui ne leur firent aucun mal.

Le lendemain, tout était rentré dans l'ordre. A la tempête de la veille avaient succédé le calme, la sérénité des époques les plus heureuses – et des bandits armés de John Jones, il ne restait plus que des vaincus qui, tout saignants encore des blessures reçues la veille, allaient commencer tristement le dur voyage de l'exil.

Un court épisode vint seulement clore la période militante des Comités. Dans les derniers jours de september, un des bandits, Bernard Lacouture, banni pour vol commis en complicité avec ses trois beaux-frères, les Herpin, et accusé d'assassinat sur la personne d'Emile Comeau, dans la prairie de la Côte-Gelée, – Bernard Lacouture s'aventura à la Nouvelle-Ibérie. Informé de son retour, le major St-Julien se rendit à la maison où était le banni. La maîtresse de la maison prétendit qu'il était absent. Alors le Major ordonna qu'on explorât le grenier; deux ou trois hommes y montèrent et furent accueillis par deux coups de feu, qui se perdirent dans les boiseries. Le Major monta à son tour, seul selon son habitude, et comme il se présentait à la porte du grenier, il fut frappé au cou d'une hache qui heureusement ne l'atteignit que par ricochet . . . sans quoi la blessure eût été mortelle. Il chancela, mais avec son vigoureux sang-froid, répondit par deux coups de pistolet, après avoir inutilement sommé de se rendre Lacouture, qui tomba pour ne plus se relever, baigné dans son sang. Ce sang n'était pas plus pur que celui de Geneus Guidry, et le sort des deux victimes de la lutte doit être léger à la conscience des Vigilants.

REBELS WITHOUT A CAUSE[1]

From the *Franklin Register*

Scandalous: It is said that one of the commands that were in the recent fight on the Lafourche [Bayou Lafourche] threw away everything they had about them, except their guns, and made back tracks, boasting, as they ran, that they had not fired a gun. This is scandalous, if true.

Notes

1. From the *Franklin Register*, Oct. 30, 1862, quoted in the New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, Nov. 21, 1862.

SECESSION FROM THE CONFEDERACY?[1]

From the Richmond (Indiana) Palladium

The Union feeling in this part of the state [Lafayette, St. Martin and Vermilion parishes] – especially among the poorer class of citizens, is very strong. They are coming into our [Union] lines by the hundreds, and either volunteering or taking the oath of allegiance [to the United States]. Many of them say they have not been home or inside of a house, for eighteen months, but have been hiding in the swamps to avoid the [Confederate] conscription. There is now already near three hundred of them mounted, and acting as scouts, and they are found to be useful, as they are acquainted with every part of the country. [General John Pratt, the local Confederate conscription officer, was captured recently by Union forces. His beard look]ed more like porcupine quills than anything human, and to finish the beauty of his face, it was sprinkled miscellaneously from the chin to his eye brows with tobacco juice. His military apparel consists of a drab colored coat, with broad cape; pants of the piece but very greasy; a dirty shirt, which had once been red, a rough pair of boots, and a broad-brim straw hat . . . The union men were glad to get him prisoner. They danced and jabbered around like so many Indians, and were much surprised that our Generals did not order him hung without ceremony. He has been a terror to all the loyal men of the country; hunting them down with dogs, like slaves, and those that escaped his savage cruelty, did so by fleeing to the swamps and cane brakes for safety. And now they are coming forth like the leaves of the forest, eager to be armed and swear eternal vengeance against their prosecutors. They have been shut up in the swamps so long, they are little better than wild men, as indeed they look, and then there will [be] a fearful reckoning soon for their wrongs and suffering . . .

Notes

1. From the Richmond (Indiana) Palladium, [Sept., 1863], Walter J. Burke Papers, Southwestern Archives, Collection 28, Folio 1-G, U. S. L., Lafayette, La.

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OZEME CARRIERE AND THE ST. LANDRY JAYHAWKERS, 1863-1865

by Carl A. Brasseaux

During the twilight years of the Civil War, the northern St. Landry prairies were protected from Confederate impressment parties by a band of Jayhawkers, or anti-Confederates, led by Ozeme Carriere. Well armed, well acquainted with the terrain, and courageous, Carriere's Jayhawkers not only held the Confederates at bay, but, paradoxically, frequently murdered innocent civilians as well. Why did Carriere's men take up arms against the Confederates? How did they survive? Why did they kill civilians whom they purported to protect? And who were their victims? These questions can be considered only after a cursory examination of the historical developments contributing to the uniqueness of the predominately Creole[1] northern prairies which spawned Carriere's Jayhawker band.

In the twilight years of the antebellum period, the southwestern Louisiana prairies were infested with rustlers and banditti whom the Baton Rouge *Weekly Gazette* and *Comet* characterized in 1860 as «the basest scoundrels that ever disgraced human form.»[2] Active vigilante groups in the southern prairie parishes of Lafayette, Vermilion, and St. Martin attempted to exterminate this criminal element, and, at the celebrated Battle of Bayou Queue Tortue in late 1859, captured many of the brigands.[3] Most of the bandits, however, were flogged and released with an admonition to quit the Pelican State.

Although disobedience would inevitably result in death in the event of recapture by the vigilantes, most of the captives turned a deaf ear to the warning and continued their life of crime from bases in the sparsely inhabited portions of western St. Landry Parish. As a consequence, by 1860, vigilantes from Lafayette and Vermilion parishes frequently conducted raids upon the alleged criminal bases. The raiders victims, however, were all too frequently innocent prairie settlers, prompting the St. Landrians to organize counter-vigilante groups. As a consequence, by mid-1860, St. Landry Parish was the scene of bloody guerilla warfare reminiscent of «Bleeding Kansas.»[4] Fighting, however, was suspended during the 1860 presidential campaign and the ensuing secession crisis.

During the campaign, residents of the counter-vigilante bastion of Bois Mallet (a predominately Creole area surrounding present-day Swords) actively supported the Constitutional-Union candidate, John Bell, the major local opponent of John Breckinridge, the Southern rights candidate who was supported by vigilante leaders. In fact, Bell received eighty-one per cent of the ballots cast at the Bois Mallet poll.[5]

Following the election, Governor Thomas O. Moore called for a secession convention, and, shortly thereafter former vigilante leaders and sympathizers launched campaigns on the secessionist ticket. The pro-secessionist movement in St. Landry Parish was led by former governor Alexandre Mouton who had lent the prestige of his name to the vigilante cause.[6] Following his election as a delegate to the convention, representing the state senatorial district of which St. Landry was a part, Mouton served as president of the assembly and, under the former governor's leadership, the convention severed the state's ties with the Union.[7]

Because of the vigilante leaders' support of the Southern cause, Louisiana's secession and subsequent incorporation into the Confederate States were apparently unpopular among the northern prairie Creoles, for few of them rallied to the Confederacy's colors in the ensuing months. For example, of the eighty-eight officers and men who enlisted in the «Sons of St. Landry,» a Confederate company recruited in the Opelousas and upper prairie areas, only twenty-eight per cent were prairie Creoles.[8]

The prairie Creoles' initial indifference to the Confederacy was quickly transformed into animosity in late April, 1862, when the Confederate Congress adopted the first conscription act in American history.[9] One month later, the local militia commander, Brigadier-General John G. Pratt, established Camp Pratt, a camp of instruction of the northern shore of Spanish Lake, and subsequently began impressing reluctant prairie conscripts into the Confederate army.[10]

Forced into the Confederate service, the conscripts' morale was understandably low. A Union intelligence report of September, 1862, for example, said that among the Rebel forces in South Louisiana, «there is great dissatisfaction among the troops.»[11] This dissatisfaction was manifested in spring 1863 by wholesale desertions among Southwest Louisiana conscripts during the rapid retreat of Major-General Richard Taylor's Confederate army following defeats on the lower Teche at the hands of Major-General N.P. Banks' Yankee invaders.[12]

After deserting the Confederate army, many Creole conscripts organized on the northern prairie, «10 to 18 miles west» of Opelousas for the purpose of resisting reinduction into the Rebel army.[13] During the the summer of 1863, Ozeme Carriere, a prairie Creole, welded the deserters into a tightly knit, quasi-military force. Once organized, Carriere's «battalion»[14] – Jayhawkers as they were christened by Opelousas Confederate sympathisers – became a haven for the ever growing number of South Louisianians deserting Taylor's army. The number of deserters was augmented by fugitive slaves, and after July, 1864, by free men of color escaping Confederate attempts to impress them into North Louisiana work crews.[15] The admission of blacks into the outlaw band appears to have been Carriere's decision, for, prior to the war, he had cohabitated with two mulatto women.[16]

As Carriere's forces grew, he was faced with logistical problems. In order to arm and feed the outlaws, Carriere ordered raids upon isolated prairie residences from Plaquemine Brule to the southwestern outskirts of Opelousas; «horses, cattle and saddles» were the usual objects taken.[17]

Because of the raids' demoralizing effect upon the civilian morale, the local civil and military authorities organized a punitive strike.

As reported by the August 15, 1863, issue of the *Opelousas Courier*:

> On Sunday last, a company of mounted troops, joined, it appears, by some citizens, started in pursuit of the jayhawkers, and when arrived in their quarter, dismounted and leisurely laid down, waiting for something or other, when, all at once here come the jayhawkers pouncing upon them and throwing dismay among the crowd. Firing commenced, running too commenced, and from what we can learn we had one man killed and several wounded, one of whom has since died. We know not the loss of the other side . . . .

With their victory over combined Confederate and Home Guard forces, Carriere's Jayhawkers became the undisputed masters of the upper prairie. Having grown to approximately 1,000 men by February, 1864, Carriere's «battalion» established a defensive perimeter stretching from Prairie Mamou to upper Vermilion Parish.[18] Moreover, according to Governor Henry W. Allen, an additional 8,000 Confederate deserters and conscript evaders sought refuge behind the Jayhawker lines.[19]

The Jayhawkers' defensive posture, however, quickly dissolved into anarchy following the withdrawal of Confederate forces from St. Landry Parish in late winter 1864.[20] Resorting to common banditry in mid-February, Carriere's men «swept over the country known as Plaquemine Ridge, robbing the inhabitants in many instances of everything of value they possessed, but taking particularly all the fine horses and good arms they could find. Although there are many robbers in the parish, this is the first time they have gone about publicly in daylight robbing citizens.»[21]

These raids were noteworthy not only for their boldness, but for their bloodlessness as well. Although the thieves frequently threatened to shoot their victims, as well as «every damned Confederate» they could find, the Jayhawkers injured no one in their initial raids upon the T.P. Guidry, Felix Dejean, Madison Young, Terence Jeansonne, and François Savoy residences.[22]

Despite the foraging raids, however, Carrier's power continued to grow. According to Confederate authorities in Opelousas, by late February, 1864, the Jayhawkers had become a symbol of Confederate resistance for «discontended whites and free negroes [as well as] slaves already demoralized by the Yankees. . .[23] According to Capt. H.C. Morell, enrolling officer at Opelousas:

> . . . Carriere is daily becoming more and more popular with the masses, and that every day serves to increase his gang. These men [Carriere and his lieutenants] are making the ignorant and deluded suppose that they are their champions, that the object they follow . . . is to bring the war to a close, and tell them if they could only make everybody join them the war would soon be brought to a close.[24]

Carriere's war against the Confederacy also drew the attention of the Union military command. For example, in late October, 1863, the second Federal invasion of southwestern Louisiana, General Charles P. Stone directed Major-General William B. Franklin, field commander of the Yankee expedition, to offer Carriere a commission in the Union army.[25] Carriere apparently refused to serve in the Federal army, for during the short-lived Union invasion of St. Landry Parish in late March, 1864, Franklin was ordered to obtain from a local Union sympathizer, Judge B.A. Martel, «names of reliable men who can control and make valuable to you as scouts that large body of men known as jayhawkers—more than 1,000.»[26] Like the Confederates, however, the Yankees were unable to dislodge Carriere.

Because of his increasing threat to Confederate dominion in St. Landry Parish, local civil and military leaders issued a litany of petitions for military aid to Major-general Richard Taylor, the departmental commander.[27] Taylor responded in May with a proclamation directing Confederate soldiers to shoot Jayhawkers on sight.[28] In addition, the departmental commander dispatched Col. Louis Bush's 4th Louisiana Calvalry into the area.

The 4th Louisiana's anti-Jayhawker campaign was directed by Bush's executive officer, Lt. Col. Amedee Bringier who, from May, 1864 to May, 1865, conducted a personal vendetta against Carriere. During his initial tour of duty in St. Landry Parish (October, 1863-January, 1864), Bringier's men had executed over 100 Jayhawkers.[29] Moreover, upon reassignment to «lower Louisiana» in April, 1864, Bringier gleefully informed his wife that he would soon «exterminate the Jayhawkers . . .»[30] Bringier's subsequent raids on Carriere's Bois Mallet Headquarters, however, failed to capture the Jayhawker leader.[31]

The increasing Confederate pressure, nevertheless, made the Jayhawkers increasingly desperate; the result was violence. For example, when 63-year-old Bosman Hayes of Plaquemine Brule attempted to resist eight Jayhawkers who were stealing his horses, he was murdered by Don Louis Godeau.[32] Three weeks later, Napoleon Franchebois was murdered by James Veillon during a nocturnal Jayhawker raid.[33] Finally, in early November, Carriere's men maliciously set fire to the Bois Mallet residences of Charles Derosier, Sylvin Saunier, and Joseph B. Young, «leaving their respective families to take care of themselves as best they could, and prevented them even of saving the most necessary clothing.[34]

Although the Jayhawker scourge persisted in St. Landry Parish on a less violent level in subsequent months, the murders and shootings seriously undermined Carriere's support among the masses. Moreover, during the twilight months of the war, Confederate conscription ended in southwestern Louisiana.[36] Having thus lost its *raison d'etre*, Carriere's battalion disintegrated. In fact, by May, 1865, the St. Landry Jayhawkers had dwindled to only fifty men.[37] Thus, when confronted by Bringier's cavalrymen in May, 1865, Ozeme Carriere faced overwhelming odds. He nevertheless resisted arrest and was killed in the ensuing struggle.[38]

Carriere's death signaled the end of lawlessness on the southwestern Louisiana prairies. At the height of his power in early 1864, the St. Landry Jayhawker had served as the symbolic leader of the anti-Confederate movement in the prairies, but the «liberator's» power base was quickly eroded by the depredations wrought by his subordinates upon the prairie population. Moreover, the cessation of conscription during the closing months of the war robbed Carriere's Jayhawker band of its *raison d'etre* and the unit disbanded. With the dissolution of his forces, Carriere, who had so successfully evaded Confederate assasination squads for two years, became a marked man. He nevertheless continued to resist Confederate military rule until his death shortly before Confederate Louisiana's collapse.

Notes

1. Creoles were descendants of French, Spanish, and German settlers in colonial Louisiana. For the settlement patterns of the Creole population in the northern prairies, consult the author's «The Secession Movement in St. Landry Parish, 1860-1861.» *Louisiana Review,* VII (Winter, 1978), 128-55.

2. The Baton Rouge *Weekly Gazette* and *Comet*, March 7, 1860.

3. William Arceneaux, *Acadian General: Alfred Mouton* and *the Civil War* (Lafayette, La., 1972), pp. 28-37; Alexandre Barde, *Histoire des Comites de Vigilance aux Attakapas* (Hahnville, La., 1861), pp. 388-402.

4. *Weekly Gazette* and *Comet*, May 15, 1860.

5. The *Opelousas Courier*, November 10, 1860.

6. The Brashear City *Attakapas Register,* October 1, 1859, quoted in Barde, *Comites de Vigilance,* p. 404.

7. See the *Official Journal of the Proceedings of the Convention of the State of Louisiana . . .* (New Orleans, 1861).

8. *Courier,* April 12, 1862.

9. The Confederate Congress approved the first conscription act on April 16, 1862. John D. Winters, *The Civil War in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge, 1963), p. 83.

10. Arthur W. Bergeron, Jr., ed., «Prison Life at Camp Pratt,» *Louisiana History,* XIV (Fall, 1973), 387.

11. U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies,* 128 parts in 70 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1880-1901), Series 1, Volume XV, Page 245; hereafter cited as *OR*, with series, volume, and page numbers.

12. Major-general Richard Taylor, commander of Confederate forces in western Louisiana reported that «Nearly the whole of Lieutenant Colonel V.A. Fournet's battalion, passing through the country in which the men lived, before joining the army, deserted with their arms . . .» *OR*, 1, XV, 393.

13. *Courier*. August 15, 1863.

14. *Ibid.*

15. General Orders No. 55, Bureau of Conscription, Trans-Mississippi Department, published in *ibid.*, August 20, 1864.

16. According to the 1860 census, Carriere was a 29-year-old prairie settler who lived with Mary Guillory, a 35-year-old mulattress, and her 20-year-old sister, May T. Guillory. He was an illiterate farmer, owning $2,000 in personal property and $500 in real estate. Eighth Decennial Census of the United States, 1860, St. Landry Parish, p. 130.

17. *Courier*, August 15, 1863.

18. Operating to the north of Carriere, near Bayou Chicot, was a small Jayhawker unit commanded by Dr. Dudley who claimed to have received a Union commission as major in 1864. To the southwest of Carriere's forces, along the Mermentau River, operated a Jayhawker band about which little is known. The Mermentau Jayhawkers, who conducted raids as far North

as Opelousas, were apparently dispersed by Confederate cavalry in February, 1864. «Major» Dudley's unit, on the other hand, was captured and executed by Confederate authorities in January, 1865. *Ibid.*, February 20, March 5, 1864; January 28, 1865; *OR*, 1, XXXIV, 599, 962-77.

19. Winters. *Civil War*, p. 306; *OR*, 1, XXXIV, 966.

20. *OR*, 1, XXXIV, 966.

21. *Ibid.*

22. The Jayhawker raiding parties were led by Carriere's lieutenants—Don Louis Godeau, Agile Myers, Edouard Simon, Maximilien Guillory and one Ardoin. *Ibid.*, 962-68.

23. *Ibid.*, 966.

24. *Ibid.*

25. Dr. Dudley apparently received his commission by this means. *Ibid.* XXVI, 978.

26. *Ibid.*, XXXIV, 599.

27. *Ibid.*, 962, 965-67.

28. Proclamation by Major-General Richard Taylor, May 18, 1864. Louis Amedee Bringier Papers, Louisiana State University Archives, Baton Rouge, Louisiana; hereafter cited as Bringier Papers.

29. *Courier*, March 5, 1864.

30. Louis Amedee Bringier to Stella Bringier, April 21, 1864, Bringier Papers.

31. Louis Amedee Bringier to his son, November 26, 1864; Louis Amedee Bringier to Headquarters, January 13, 1865; Bringier Papers.

32. *Courier*, September 10, 1864.

33. *Ibid.*, October 29, 1864.

34. *Ibid.*, November 5, 1864.

35. *Ibid.*

36. J.L. Brent to Louis Amedee Bringier, May 10, 1865, Bringier Papers.

37. Napier Bartlett, *Military Record of Louisiana* . . . (Baton Rouge, 1964), Part III, 36.

38. *Ibid.*

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PRINCE CAMILLE DE POLIGNAC AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR, 1863-1865

By Roy O. Hatton

THE DE POLIGNAC HERITAGE

On November 15, 1913, Camille Armand Jules Marie, Prince de Polignac died at his desk from cerebral edema while attempting to work a mathematical problem that had puzzled him for a number of years. Thus ended in a rather mild manner the life of a versatile and talented man. His death was not indicative of the way he had lived. During his eighty-one full and eventful years he had achieved distinction in many varied and unrelated fields, including journalism, mathematics, and civil engineering.

As a soldier of fortune he fought in three wars in different parts of the world, receiving praise and honor in each for his gallantry and bravery. In the Crimean War he achieved the rank of second lieutenant at the age of twenty-one. Polignac served as major general in both the American Civil War and the Franco-Prussian War. He has the distinction of being the only foreigner to hold flag rank in the American Civil War.

Camille de Polignac's achievements can be attributed to his devoted effort and remarkable ability. Yet his heritage alone was sufficient to satisfy the desire of most men for prestige and status. Polignac could trace his ancestors to the ninth century and the Province of Velay where they were the sovereign power, even to the extent of issuing coins. The site of the family castle was originally a Roman settlement known as *Costal Lum Appollom Acum* from which the name de Polignac is derived.

Camille de Polignac came from that breed of men who could not be satisfied with the formal and leisurely life of most people of noble birth. He belonged to that group who would stubbornly suffer many hardships while fighting for a cause.

Camille's grandparents were intimately associated with the French monarchy during the years of the Revolution and Restoration. His grandmother, «the beautiful Duchess de Polignac was the bosom friend of Queen Marie Antoinette, and her children were brought up with those of the royal family.» Her son, Camille's father, Jules Armand Auguste Marie, Prince de Polignac (1780-1847), a politician and diplomat, brought a great deal of suffering to the Polignac family because of his devotion to the royal cause, spending ten years in prison under Napoleon.

After the Bourbons were restored to power in 1814, Jules was released from prison, held various governmental offices and played a leading role in the annexation of Algeria. In 1820 the title of «Prince» was bestowed upon him by Pope Pius VII. He served as Ambassador to the English court, and was called by Charles X in 1829 to become Minister of Foreign Affairs and President of the Council. As President of the Council he was held responsible for issuing the Four Ordinances which were the immediate cause of the revolution of July, 1830. He attempted to escape, but was arrested and condemned to perpetual imprisonment, spending six years in the Fortress of Ham. By amnesty in 1837 his sentence was commuted to exile.

The family spent most of its time in exile at the Castle of Wildthurn in Bavaria. Later Jules was permitted to re-enter his native land on the condition that he not live in Paris. He resided at St. Germain until his death on March 29, 1847.

Camille de Polignac was born, February 16, 1832, at Millemont Seine-et-Oise, France during the first few months of his father's imprisonment. Camille was one of five children, the third of four boys. His mother, Marie Charlotte Parkyns, was the second wife of Jules de Polignac. Of English noble birth, she was the daughter of the Lord of Rancliffe.

In 1842, at the age of ten, Polignac went to Paris to study at St. Stanislas College. He spent ten years there, making a brilliant record as a student, excelling in mathematics and music. These, along with the study of political economy, were his favorite hobbies. While at St. Stanislas College, Polignac took part in an academic contest, the «Concurs générale.» Competing against all university students in France, he won first prize in higher mathematics.

Having completed his education, Polignac joined the French army in May, 1853, and was promoted to the rank of sergeant of artillery of the Third Regiment of Chasseurs on June 13, 1854. During the Crimean War, he fought with the Fourth Hussars in the trenches of Sevastopol. His conduct on the battlefield won him a commission as second lieutenant of the Fourth Regiment of Chasseurs d'Afrique.

At the end of the Crimean War in 1856, Polignac returned to France for garrison duty and received the medal of the Crimean War. Garrison duty did not satisfy his restless character, so he resigned his commission, February 26, 1859, to take a trip to Central America to study political economy and the geographical conditions of that area.

In the course of events Polignac met P. G. T. Beauregard in 1859 in New York in the office of a mutual friend, Major John G. Barnard. Beauregard, apparently familiar with Polignac's accomplishments as a civil engineer, invited him to inspect the fortifications of New Orleans. Due to pressing obligations at home, however, Polignac had to return to France and was unable to accept the invitation.

In 1860, he went to Nicaragua where he was employed by that government to organize the defense of its transit facilities. To counteract British influence in that country, Polignac proposed a plan whereby the United States was to assume responsibility for the protection of the lives and property of her citizens using those facilities. He returned to New York with a letter from Alexander Dimitry, the United States Minister to Central America, introducing him to a number of prominent people, among them Senator John Slidell of Louisiana, to whom he was to offer his proposal. While the plan met with the approval of Slidell and Judah P. Benjamin, it was never adopted. Polignac blamed the rejection of the project on «a lack of funds.»

Polignac returned to Paris. At the outbreak of the Civil War, he wrote to P. G. T. Beauregard, expressing his sympathy for the Southern cause and offering to recruit Irishmen through one of his cousins who had estates in Ireland. He also indicated his willingness to recruit a number of noncommissioned officers from France for the Confederacy. Expressing his views toward the South, Polignac explained:

> I have followed with the deepest interest the great events which have taken place in your country, and all my sympathies have been with the democratic party whose rights seemed to be incontestable . . . I have always had a profound admiration for your country. I have always considered it as an adopted fatherland where I shall be happy to someday settle. I have even left the French Army for the sole purpose of making a beginning of the project . . . I wish only to show you that I perpetuated the traditions which make our two nations, two sisters, and that I shall be happy to come and offer the tribute of my person to your cause.

THE FIRST YEARS OF THE CIVIL WAR

Polignac's offer of service to the Confederacy was accepted and he returned from France, arriving in New York on June 12, 1861. He then proceeded to Richmond, Virginia, and reported for active duty. On July 16, he was made lieutenant-colonel of infantry in the Confederate army, and became chief of staff to General P. G. T. Beauregard.

The twenty-nine year old Polignac, a distant cousin of Thaddeus Kosciusko, posed a striking figure. He was a «firey little man; erect in figure, with keen black eyes, white teeth that showed brilliantly when he smiled, and a dark waxed mustache which lent a fierceness to his expression . . .» His Napoleonic beard brought many stares and jokes as he rode past the soldiers.

This polished Frenchman of noble birth, a favorite in European court circles, had remarkable powers of adjustment. Within a short time he was able to mingle with the crude rustics in his charge. His drill tactics seem to have left some of the backwoodsmen awed, for at the Richmond fairgrounds one of the mountaineers said of Polignac: «that-thur furriner he calls out er lot er gibberish, and thum-thur Dagoes jes maneuvers-up like Hell-beatin'-tan-bark! Jes like he was talkin sense!» Even though the mountaineer did not understand the foreigner's «gibberish,» Polignac spoke English fluently and, when he lost his temper, even «swore like a trooper.»

During the summer of 1862, Polignac accompanied General Beauregard to Corinth, Mississippi, where he aided in reorganizing the Army of the West. He was transferred to General Braxton Bragg's staff on July 17, 1862, when General Beauregard was forced to retire because of ill health. Accompanying General Bragg when he invaded Kentucky, Polignac first distinguished himself as Confederate soldier in the battle at Richmond, Kentucky, August 29-30, 1862. He was praised by Colonel Benjamin J. Hill, commander of the Second Brigade, Fourth Division of the Army of Kentucky, who stated in his report:

> While I make no invidious distinction between the actions of officers and men under my command, I feel it obligatory to mention the gallantry of Lieutenant Colonel Polignac, who, in the last fight before Richmond seized the colors of the Fifth Tennessee, bearing them trium-

> phantly through the thickest of the fight and encouraged the men to withstand a terrible fire.

Colonel Preston Smith, commanding the First Brigade, also reported that Polignac deserved the thanks of the country for his bravery in the battle. Because of his gallantry, Polignac was promoted to brigadier-general on January 10, 1863, and was assigned to the Army of Tennessee. On March 24, 1863, he received a special order from the Adjutant General's office to proceed without delay with his staff to Alexandria, Louisiana, to report to Lieutenant General E. Kirby Smith, Commander of the Trans-Mississippi Department, for assignment to duty.

Arriving in Louisiana in the spring of 1863, Polignac was assigned to the command of General Richard Taylor, who placed him in command of a Texas brigade of about 700 men, recently dismounted and transferred to the Trans-Mississippi Department from Arkansas. The men were discontented to the point of mutiny, and swore that «a damn frog-eating Frenchman» with a name they could not pronounce and whose orders they could not understand would never command them. General Taylor went to the camp and pointed out the consequences of disobedience to officers, but added that if they were dissatisfied with Polignac after an engagement, he would be transferred to another command. In Taylor's words, «Order was restored, but it was uphill work for General Polignac for some time, notwithstanding his patience and good temper.»

The strangeness of Polignac's name and its effect on the Texans has been told in two humorous accounts. It seems the soldiers, having distorted his name, pronouncing it «polecat,» would hold their noses whenever he was near. When Polignac realized what they were doing, he led them on a long, hard ride through the woods with hopes of bringing them in contact with the animal they were trying to avoid. Another account is given by Mrs. Louise Wigfall Wright:

> Probably, most of these Texan soldiers had never seen a Frenchman before; they had never tested Prince Polignac's prowess. He was certainly, both in appearance and manners, unlike any of the Rangers, whom it had been their happy fate to follow in other battles, and as they glanced at the dapper little Frenchman, they shook their heads ominously, and with derisive laughter dubbed him «polecat.» It was impossible that such a sobriquet should have been given and uttered frequently, secure in the Prince's ignorance of the vocabulary, without his curiosity being aroused, and questions following which finally discovered to him the play upon his name, and the meaning of the word. He maintained a discreet silence and never revealed his knowledge, nor his indignation, until one day – when the brigade being ordered into battle he had his revenge. As the order was given to charge, he raised himself in his stirrups and brandishing his sword aloft he led his men in person, shouting at the top of his voice, «Follow me, follow me. You call me «Polecat,» I will show you whether I am «Polecat» or «Polignac.» And he did. With an answering shout they followed him, and that battle over, never had a word of ridicule more for the gallant little Frenchman, who led them to victory.

During the first few months of 1864

General Taylor was attempting to organize his army in Louisiana. Polignac was given the job of rounding up conscripts and impressing animals for artillery purposes. He was ordered to take only those animals that might fall into enemy hands but, misunderstanding the order, he took all the animals he needed, and was directed to return some of those taken from loyal persons.

With the increased activity of the Union Army at Vicksburg, Polignac suggested that he make a raid in the vicinity of Vidalia, Louisiana, within enemy lines. Polignac's suggestion to raid the Vidalia area was accepted and he was ordered to take control of all the country bordering the Tensas River, Lake Concordia and Bayou Concordia.

Polignac made the raid on Vidalia with two regiments of Texas cavalry, two infantry regiments, and six pieces of artillery. His raid was a success for he drove off the enemy, captured some mules and cattle and was able to break up the Yankee lessees occupying plantations on Lake Concordia and along the river.

From Vidalia Polignac moved with his brigade and a battery to Trinity (Jonesville), Louisiana, located approximately forty-five miles to the northwest of Vidalia, to meet a squadron of six gunboats – one ironclad and five wooden boats – which had begun moving up the Ouachita River on March 1, 1864. As the gunboats advanced up the river they were pursued by a light force of cavalry led by Captain W. H. Gillespie. Lieutenant Oscar Gaudet, commanding the Confederate artillery, fired on the boats with two twelve-pounder howitzers. He was within three hundred yards of the ironclad but could not check its progress or prevent the heavily-armed vessels from shelling Trinity.

As soon as the gunboats had passed Trinity, Polignac moved his infantry and artillery to Harrisonburg, Louisiana, a distance of about twelve miles, leaving his cavalry at Trinity under the command of Captain J. B. Randle. When the gunboats approached Harrisonburg at 10:00 A.M. on March 2, Polignac was prepared, having placed two infantry regiments and one section of artillery on the bank of the Ouachita River, extending from the mouth of Bushley Bayou to the town.

The infantry and artillery opened fire on the gunboats simultaneously. The ironclad was safe from artillery fire, and the wooden boats were well protected by plates of sheet-iron which had been placed along their sides. Nevertheless, unknown to Polignac at the time, his fire did considerable damage to one of the wooden vessels, the *Fort Hindman*. As the boats moved slowly up the river, they fired on the troops along the bank, bombarded the town and riddled several houses with shot. Fort Beauregard, under construction at Harrisonburg, was also destroyed.

The *Fort Hindman* was forced to drop back below the mouth of Bushley Bayou while the other boats continued up the river. They later returned to spend the night one mile above Trinity and on the morning of March 3 began shelling the village for the second time. Polignac, at Harrisonburg, was not informed of the movement of the enemy. Upon learning that the gunboat *Fort Hindman* had been crippled by artillery fire on March 2 and required towing to Trinity, Polignac immediately detached two infantry regiments to return to the town. It had rained throughout the previous night and Polignac declared: «The road is almost impassable. I cannot move any artillery over it. My troops are very worn out and deficient in rations.» He added, «I will be my best.»

Road conditions made it impossible for

the infantry to reach Trinity in time to prevent three 32-pounders from falling into the hands of the enemy. Two of the guns had been hidden in the water earlier by the Confederates who were unable to move them due to the condition of the road. When the water began to fall rapidly the following day, they were easily discovered. During the night of March 2, the Union force had found the other gun, buried on the river bank.

On March 5, the gunboats returned to the Mississippi. According to Rear Admiral David Porter, United States Navy, the Ouachita River expedition was perfectly successful.

General Richard Taylor held a contrary view about the outcome of the engagement. In his book the General later asserted that «the gunboats were driven off.» According to Taylor, Polignac «by his coolness under fire, gained the confidence of his men, . . . he soon gained their affections by his care and attention. They got on famously, and he made capital soldiers out of them.»

THE RED RIVER CAMPAIGN

After the fall of Vicksburg on July 4, 1863 and the opening of the Mississippi River to Union forces, it was no secret that northwestern Louisiana would be invaded. Lieutenant General E. Kirby Smith and Major General Richard Taylor expected the invasion to take place as soon as the water on Red River was high enough to allow navigation. Their expectations proved well founded, for on March 12, 1864, nineteen Federal gunboats under the command of Admiral David Porter entered the mouth of Red River. Following him were 10,000 men of William T. Sherman's army, commanded by Brigadier General A. J. Smith. Major General Nathaniel P. Banks, stationed in New Orleans, was to join Porter and Smith with his troops and was to serve as field commander of the Red River expedition.

The purpose of the invasion was to establish a base of operations against Texas. The strategy was to prevent the South from selling its cotton and, at the same time, to gain access to that product for Northern mills. In addition, the Federal government felt an invasion should be made before French troops, who had entered Mexico City in June, 1863, could move into Texas. Rumors prevailed that the French might attempt to annex Texas, Arizona, and Louisiana.

General Taylor began preparations to meet the Federal forces. His first effort was to try to complete the construction of Fort De Russy on Red River. From his headquarters in Alexandria, he began to concentrate his troops. On March 7, Polignac's brigade was ordered to return to Alexandria from Harrisonburg. Taylor planned to send Polignac to Fort De Russy to reinforce General William R. Scurry's troops. Polignac delayed to wait for two regiments which he had sent from Harrisonburg to Trinity in his recent engagement with Federal gunboats. He arrived in Alexandria on March 12, ahead of his brigade which was delayed until March 14. Polignac's troops arrived too late to be of any help, for on that day Fort De Russy fell under attack by General A. J. Smith.

After the surrender of Fort De Russy, Taylor began a 200 mile retreat. Abandoning Alexandria he joined the main body of his troops on Bœuf Bayou, twenty-five miles south of Alexandria. There, under the command of Alfred Mouton, Polignac's and Henry Gray's brigades were united to form a division. Taylor's entire force consisted of about 7,000 men.

Taylor ended his retreat at Mansfield on April 3 and established headquarters in the area. By April 6, most of his army had arrived.

The following day battle preparations were begun on a site three miles below Mansfield covering a crossroad leading to the Sabine River. Taylor placed his troops on either side of the Mansfield-Pleasant Hill Road. Reinforcements increased his forces to about 8,800 men.

On the morning of April 8, as Taylor rode along the lines waiting for the action to break, he called out to Polignac: «Little Frenchman, I am going to fight Banks here if he has a million men.» It was afternoon before the Federal troops began emerging from the woods on the far side of a clearing which was about 1,000 yards wide. Taylor, believing these troops were massing for an assault, waited impatiently. At four o'clock, with no sign of action from the Union troops, he ordered General Mouton to attack.

Mouton's division charged across the field «under murderous fire of artillery and musketry.» When Mouton, along with many of his officers and men, was killed, Polignac took charge and continued the attack. He «displayed ability and pressed the shattered division steadily forward.» «The division never halted for a moment nor even fell into confusion, but under the gallant Polignac pressed stubbornly on.» Seven hundred sixty-two men were killed in the division which had consisted of 2,200 men at the beginning of the charge. According to the journal of W. W. Heartsill, a participant in the battle, Polignac was wounded, but apparently not seriously, since this is the only report of the general's misfortune.

For an hour the Federals held their position; then, lacking organization and running out of ammunition, they gave way, panicked and began to flee. «On they ran. Guns, knapsacks, blankets – everything was thrown away by the frantic soldiers as the hue and cry of the exultant southerners rang in their ears.»

Shortly before nightfall the Federals were driven from a small creek by forces under Polignac, Thomas Green and John G. Walker. At first their men made little impression on the Federals, but they persisted in their attack and the enemy fell back. The creek was the only water supply other than Mansfield seven miles away. The Confederates camped near the creek that night and made preparations for the next day's battle. (They had clearly won a victory. General Taylor's command of little more than 8,000 men had been able to repulse the 12,000 men of Banks' army and to force a retreat. As a result of his magnificent leadership, Polignac was appointed major general. Thus Polignac became the only foreigner to achieve this rank in either the Confederate or Union army. He also assumed command of Mouton's old division.

During the night of April 8, General Thomas Churchill arrived from Keachi with 4,400 Arkansas and Missouri troops to reinforce Taylor. Banks decided not to make a stand and began his retreat during the night. Early on the morning of the ninth, Taylor ordered his entire force to pursue the Federal army. The cavalry, commanded by Thomas Green, was followed by the infantry units of Thomas Churchill, Mosby M. Parson, John G. Walker and Camille de Polignac.

Banks decided to force a battle at the village of Pleasant Hill, located on a mile-square plateau. The Federal troops formed their line across the open plateau from College Hill, the highest ground on the left, to the woods bordering the Mansfield road on the right. Union troops had been reinforced by General A. J. Smith, moving up from Natchitoches, increasing the Federal force to about 24,000 men.

Taylor's full force arrived at Pleasant Hill by one o'clock in the afternoon. Because the men were too thirsty and tired to fight, the attack was postponed while they rested. At four o'clock they were ready for battle. Polignac's division, which had suffered most in the action on the previous day, was held in reserve on the Mansfield road.

The Confederates charged the Federal lines, but were repulsed. They fell back, reformed their lines and charged repeatedly, suffering heavy losses. Walker was wounded and Polignac was ordered forward to reinforce Walker's division. Standing in his saddle, Polignac shouted: «My boys, follow your Polignac.» His men made several charges, but the Federal line repulsed them, at times «as if by a resistless and superhuman power.»

After nightfall the Confederate commands became separated in the dense woods and began firing at each other. Fighting continued until nine o'clock when Taylor, to prevent more confusion, withdrew his troops and fell back six miles to a water supply. Polignac with one brigade of cavalry remained behind to cover the retreat. Thus the Battle of Pleasant Hill ended in a Confederate defeat.

The next morning the Confederates found themselves in possession of Pleasant Hill, for Banks again had retreated during the night. The cavalry pursued Banks while the infantry returned to Mansfield to rest and obtain supplies. On April 12, Polignac, in the field near Mansfield, praised his troops for the gallantry they had displayed in the recent battle:

> Thanks to your valor and your untiring energy, the host that had invaded the country and was moving up spreading devastation . . . has been repulsed and is now in full retreat.

The three infantry divisions of Walker, Churchill and Parson left Mansfield for Shreveport on April 14, followed by Taylor on the 15th, to begin operations against General Frederick Steele in Arkansas. E. Kirby Smith decided to conduct the campaign personally, and left Taylor in command at Shreveport.

Polignac, in Taylor's absence, commanded the forces remaining on Red River. On April 14, he moved his division of infantry, numbering approximately 2,000 effectives, toward Grand Ecore to support the cavalry engaging Banks' army there. Polignac arrived on April 19 and assumed command of the Confederate forces. With less than 5,000 fighting men, Polignac was able to continually harass Banks. Banks' attempt to leave Grand Ecore on the morning of April 21 was thwarted by Polignac's cavalry and skirmishers. Skirmishing continued all day, but there was no general engagement. Banks again resorted to a night retreat, marching thirty-two miles to Cloutierville without halting.

Troops were detailed to pursue Banks. Attacking the Union forces on April 23, the Confederates forced a retreat to Monette's Ferry on the Cane River four miles south of Cloutierville. The Federals crossed the river at that point. Polignac attempted to reinforce Confederate troops at Monette's Ferry, but arrived too late to prevent the last Federal troops from escaping. The pursuit of Banks by a part of the Confederate cavalry and a portion of Polignac's division of infantry continued. The Federals, however, offered no resistance until they were safe in Alexandria under the protection of their gunboats.

With Banks' army confined behind earthworks at Alexandria, Taylor, who had arrived from Shreveport to join his troops, decided to divide his command in an attempt to blockade Red River and cut off Federal communication with the Mississippi. John Austin Wharton's cavalry was split into three units. William Steele was to command the first and was sent to hold the river and Rapides roads to the north and west of Alexandria. Arthur P. Bagby, commanding the second unit, was sent to the Bœuf road to the south of Steele's command and James P. Major was sent to Davide's Ferry, twenty-five miles south of Alexandria on Red River. Polignac's infantry, which consisted of 1,200 men, was located on Bœuf Bayou within supporting distance of Bagby and Major.

Polignac had orders to attack any force attempting to reach Alexandria. If Banks tried to leave Alexandria, Polignac and Major were to drive off all livestock in the Union line of march, seeing that none fell into their hands. On May 6th and 7th, Polignac engaged the Federals on the Rapides road and Robert and Bœuf bayous. The Federals fired on the Confederates for several hours with heavy artillery, then advanced. This action threw the Confederates into confusion but they rallied and were able to drive the Federals across Lamourie Bayou, capturing a number of prisoners. In addition, two gunboats were captured and Polignac ordered one of his officers to take possession of the badly needed guns.

Banks left Alexandria on May 14 pursued by the Confederates. Polignac, Major, and Bagby covered the front and flanks, with Isaac F. Harrison on the north side of Red River and William Steele's division following in the rear.

On May 16, Banks met Taylor's force at Mansura, about thirty miles south of Alexandria. The action was confined for the most part to artillery fire. For four hours Taylor was able to hold the Federal line, but about 10 A.M. the Federals were reinforced and Taylor was compelled to withdraw. There were few casualties on either side. Later, at a dress parade held in the field in the vicinity of Alexandria, Taylor expressed his appreciation for the gallantry which Major General Polignac and Major General Wharton and their commands displayed in the engagement.

After the engagement at Mansura, Banks marched to Simmesport, on the Atchafalaya River, where a bridge had to be constructed. It was completed on May 18. Polignac planned to attack the Federal troops as they crossed. His plans failed to materialize when A. J. Smith ordered Joseph A. Mower, with three brigades, to recross Yellow Bayou and attack the Confederates. Mower moved two miles before he met Wharton's and Polignac's cavalry and infantry divisions. In an indecisive battle the Confederates were repulsed.

Banks escaped across the Atchafalaya River. After sixty-seven days the Red River Campaign ended where it had begun on the banks of the Atchafalaya. The Federals did not invade Texas as they had planned, and for them the campaign was a failure. Although there were no decisive victories, the Confederates had accomplished their purpose. They stopped Banks' advancing army and forced a retreat. Their success prevented northwestern Louisiana from falling under Federal control. No small part of the Confederate success was due to the ability and leadership of Polignac. Taylor, in discussing the campaign, said that Polignac's and Walker's divisions had «held every position intrusted [sic] to them, carried every position in their front, and displayed a constancy and valor worthy of the Guards at Inkerman or Lee's veterans in the Wilderness!»

On June 1, while still in the vicinity of Yellow Bayou, Polignac was given a field horse by the officers of his old Texas Brigade. Colonel J. E. Harrison, who presented the horse, said:

> As a slight testimonial of our confidence in you as an officer, and our esteem for you as a gentleman . . . in behalf of the officers of the Brigade, . . . permit me to remark, that we do not regard you as a mere adventurer, borne on the fickle wave of chance, seeking wealth and distinction at the expense of a nation's blood . . .

Polignac responded:

> Amid the dangers of the field, through the drudgery of camp life, around the still campfires – the soldier's lonely hearth – you have given me back the thoughts which I daily bestow upon you, in my untiring exertions for your welfare, with fatherly solicitude. Now you have paid me back that debt of the heart ten and twenty fold, and with a large interest, for that which with me was a duty, has been with you a voluntary pledge of sympathy. This is your real gift to me; the free gift of your thoughts . . .

These were the officers of those men who earlier had called Polignac the «damn frog-eating Frenchman,» and had distorted his name, calling him «polecat.» These were the men who had threatened mutiny and swore that he would never command them. The ordinary man could not have handled such an undisciplined and dissatisfied group, much less gain their respect. Polignac was able to rise to the occasion and to gain their respect and admiration by his patience and understanding and by his devotion to duty.

MISSION TO FRANCE

During the winter of 1864-1865, Polignac received letters from friends in France who were sympathetic to the Confederacy. With the troops in winter quarters and little indication that hostilities would be renewed in the Trans-Mississippi Department, he decided that he would be of greater service to the South by seeking aid for the Confederacy abroad. Since he had been an active participant in the war he felt that he might have influence in seeking aid in France. He planned to approach Emperor Napoleon III through a mutual friend, the Duke de Morny.

Polignac discussed the idea with General E. Kirby Smith in Shreveport and asked for a six-month leave of absence. Smith agreed with Polignac's suggestion for he knew that without aid the Confederacy was doomed. Polignac then laid the plan before another intimate friend, Governor Henry Watkins Allen of Louisiana. Governor Allen agreed with the proposal, but none of the three was overly optimistic about the results that might be obtained. Nevertheless, since French commercial interests leaned toward the South, it was not beyond the realm of possibility that Polignac might be able to arouse some sympathy and interest for the Southern cause. Since time was important and there was difficulty in communicating with Richmond, neither President Jefferson Davis nor the War Department was consulted.

Polignac suggested that his chief of staff, Major T.C. Moncure, be permitted to accompany him to «give more weight to his presence abroad.» Smith and Allen approved. The Governor took the opportunity to write a letter to the Emperor to be delivered by his aide-de-camp, Colonel Ernest Miltenberger, Miltenberger was to be the official spokesman for the group, representing the state of Louisiana, not the Confederacy. Polignac did not know the contents of the letter, but Miltenberger asserted:

> He [Governor Aller] referred at length in the most pathetic manner to the strong and sacred ties that bound France and Louisiana. He also stated in very positive language, the imminent danger, in case the Confederate States should succumb, to the French occupation of Mexico [and] warned him that [in] such a contingency the immense Federal Army would beyond doubt be turned toward Mexico.

After Polignac's departure E. Kirby Smith wrote John Slidell, Confederate Minister in France, that foreign intervention was a necessity:

> It cannot be too strongly impressed upon the Emperor of the French that the security of his empire in Mexico and the interest of his own Government all demand immediate interference to restore peace and establish firmly the nationality of the Confederate States.

Smith, aware of foreign sentiment regarding slavery, declared that 95 per cent of the planters in his department would accept any system of gradual emancipation that would insure independence and peace for the people. Polignac, many years later, wrote: «Indeed, many [Southern leaders] knew too well that the institution of slavery proved the greatest bar to every hope for foreign assistance.»

In early January, 1865, Polignac, Miltenberger and Moncure left Shreveport for France, traveling across Texas to Mexico by stagecoach. The Texans, hearing of Polignac's journey, welcomed him at every stage of his trip, receiving him as a guest of the state. The party finally arrived at Matamoras, Mexico, where they were detained for about two weeks waiting for a ship to take them to Havana. Upon arrival in Havana they were detained for another two weeks before boarding a Spanish ship sailing for Cadiz, Spain. After a stormy fourteen-day voyage they arrived at Cadiz, took a stagecoach to Madrid and from Madrid traveled to Paris by train.

On the last day of the trip, while reading a newspaper, Polignac learned that the Duke de Morny had died. He realized that with the death of his friend there was little hope of accomplishing his mission. In fact, Polignac tentatively decided not to seek an audience with the Emperor. Upon arriving in Paris, however, he was greeted by a friend who was an officer in the French army, a Major de Vatry, who was on the Emperor's military staff. He arranged an interview without difficulty. According to Polignac, he was well received by the Emperor. They talked of the war, but not of political issues. When Polignac told the Emperor that the Confederacy would fight to the last for states' rights, the Emperor did not reply.

Polignac requested permission to introduce Colonel Miltenberger, with the letter from the Governor of Louisiana. The Emperor hesitated, wanting to know the contents of the letter. When Polignac assured him that he did not know the contents, his request was granted. Polignac and Miltenberger returned the next day and the Emperor received them standing. He did not open the letter but laid it on a table nearby. They talked for a few minutes, then left. Miltenberger, writing of the interview, said that he and Polignac told the Emperor the purpose of the visit:

> The Emperor listened attentively . . . and then informed us that he had at two different times, endeavored to get England to join France in taking action in behalf of the Confederate

> States, but without success, and France could not act independently of England. He then kindly said it was too late to take further action, and such was the case, as the disasterous news of Lee's army . . . indicated the early and inevitable fall of the Confederacy.

THE LATER YEARS

With the fall of the Confederacy, there was no need for Polignac to return to the United States. He had fought for a lost cause, yet he had never swerved from the belief that he was right. He never lost his love for the Confederacy and the principles for which it stood. Many years later writing to a friend in Texas, he said he had joined the Confederacy «not as a common adventurer, borne on the fickle wave of chance, but as a thinking man with an upright purpose . . . and I will ever be thankful that I devoted a span of my life to defending the Southern Confederacy.»

Renewing his travels, Polignac went again to Central America. He also wrote a number of studies in defense of the war and the Southern cause, one of which was ***L'union américaine après la guerre***, published in Paris in 1866. In this work he gave his reason for joining the Confederacy.

Polignac did not enjoy many years of relaxation and travel. In 1870 when the Franco-Prussian War began he returned to Paris from the Isle of Wight and offered his services to the French government. On the basis of his military experience and ability he was commissioned major on July 27, 1870, and, by September 16, had been promoted to lieutenant-colonel, commanding the 67th Regiment of the Gardes Nationales Mobiles of the Army of the Loire. Polignac attracted the attention of Leon Gambetta by his «brilliant military qualities.» Gambetta offered him the command, as general, over all the *Franc-Tireurs de France*. Polignac did not accept this offer because he felt that he could serve better in some other capacity. Instead, he was promoted to brigadier general of the Auxiliary Army on October 18, and took part in several battles, one of which was that of Beaune La Rolande where he again distinguished himself.

In less than a year Polignac had displayed such ability that by November 24, 1870, with the rank of major general, he was placed in command of the 1st Division of the 20th Army Corps. He fought in the Battle of Villesexel and received the Cross of Legion of Honor. Two officers wrote of Polignac:

> The officers and men of his division . . . appreciate his splendid calmness during action, and his determination and decision when in command. After the fights of Hericourt, General Bourbaki designated the Polignac division to protect the retreat. We have the honor of fighting the enemy 15 days after the armistice, without giving the enemy a single cannon, gun, or sword. The Government of the Defense had forgotten our existence.

Polignac again proved himself to be as capable a leader and soldier in the Franco-Prussian War as he had been in the Crimean War and the American Civil War.

When the war ended Polignac retired to private life, closing a military career that had taken him around the world as a participant in three wars. He turned his attention to his first love, mathematics, attending mathematical congresses where he was treated as an equal by the world's leading mathematicians.

In 1874 at the age of forty-two, Polignac married Marie Adolphine Longenberger. The marriage was short and tragic, for Marie died in childbirth, although the child, Princess Armande, lived. Polignac remarried in 1883 to Elizabeth Margaret Knight of Wolverly. This marriage produced three children, two daughters, Mable and Agnes, and one son, Victor Mansfield, named in honor of the victory at Mansfield during the American Civil War. As a family man:

> Polignac was a tender and loving husband and father. He taught his children to value the same high principles and ideals for which he fought and in which he sincerely believed. He instilled in them a love of the Confederacy, and from him they learned of Southern hospitality, Southern gallantry and Southern loyalty.

Polignac spent his last years in leisure enjoying those things he loved most: mathematics, music and riding. Death came in Paris on November 15, 1913, as he worked at his desk. He was buried in Frankfurt, Germany, in the family vault of his first wife.

CONCLUSION

Polignac's military contribution in the American Civil War was limited to the Trans-Mississippi Department where he was instrumental in repulsing the Federals, saving northwestern Louisiana and Texas from occupation. Even there he did not play a decisive role, but he was a participant who ranked in ability with such men as Walker, Churchill, Wharton, and Green. The prospect of a distinguished military career was not the motive that induced Polignac to join the Confederacy. In an article published in the *Nineteenth Century Review*, 1893, Polignac gave his views concerning the South and states' rights. He praised Southerners «for their courage and generosity» and added:

> The Southern States . . . found no help in their need. They fought singlehanded against great odds, until they sank from sheer exhaustion under the crushing weight of ever increasing hostile ranks swelled by European mercenaries.

He fought for justice and justice, as he saw it, was on the side of the South. In the same article, Polignac continued:

> The Constitutional right of secession was in reality absolute. But political truths do not rule the political world as mathematical theorems rule, & in a paramount necessity for national unity, if believed in, great inducements were found for looking on secession as an academic & obsolete principle. Thus two doctrines stood out in bold contrast to each other: the modern notion of national sovereignity [sic] pitted against the traditional notion of State Sovereignity [sic]. On one side the allegiance to an indissoluble aggregate of states; on the other side allegiance to each state considered as a political unit, viewed academically. Both notions are normal and can furnish the basis of a fundamental compact.
>
> But the doctrine of national unity was more in conformity with modern views, favoring political concentration. The North inaugurated the policy of the future. On the other hand, the doctrine of State rights was a revered tradition, it clung to the past . . .

He concludes with a note of optimism which conspicuously lacks the bitterness often associated with defeat:

> All well-wishers to the American Republic must rejoice at its success and hail with unqualified gratification the inauguration of a policy which, with the potential energy derived from free institutions will bear the nation onwards in her peaceful path and confer lasting prosperity on a generous and united people.

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THE BATTLE OF BULL RUN
July 21, 1861

By P.G.T. BEAUREGARD

Sunday, July 21st, bearing the fate of the new-born Confederacy, broke brightly over the fields and woods that held the hostile forces. My scouts, thrown out in the night toward Centreville along the Warrenton turnpike, had reported that the enemy was concentrating along the latter. This fact, together with the failure of the Federals in their attack upon my center at Mitchell's and Blackburn's fords, had caused me to apprehend that they would attempt my left flank at the Stone Bridge, and orders were accordingly issued by half-past four o'clock to the brigade commanders to hold their forces in readiness to move at a moment's notice, together with the suggestion that the Federal attack might be expected in that quarter. Shortly afterward the Federals were reported to be advancing from Centreville on the Warrenton turnpike, and at half-past five o'clock as deploying a force in front of Evans. As their movement against my left developed the opportunity I desired, I immediately sent orders to the brigade commanders, both front and reserves, on my right and center to advance and vigorously attack the Federal left flank and rear at Centreville, while my left, under Cocke and Evans with their supports, would sustain the Federal attack in the quarter of the Stone Bridge, which they were directed to do to the last extremity. The center was likewise to advance and engage the enemy in front, and directions were given to the reserves, when without orders, to move toward the sound of the heaviest firing. The ground in our front on the other side of Bull Run afforded particular advantage for these tactics. Centreville was the apex of a triangle – its short side running by the Warrenton turnpike to Stone Bridge, its base Bull Run, its long side a road that ran from Union Mills along the front of my other Bull Run positions and trended off to the rear of Centreville, where McDowell had massed his main forces; branch roads led up to this one from the fords between Union Mills and Mitchell's. My forces to the right of the latter ford were to advance, pivoting on that position; Bonham was to advance from Mitchell's ford, Longstreet from Blackburn's, D.R. Jones from McLean's, and Ewell from Union Mills by the Centreville road. Ewell, as having the longest march, was to begin the movement, and each brigade was to be followed by its reserve. In anticipation of this method of attack, and to prevent accidents, the subordinate commanders had been carefully instructed in the movement by me in conference the night before, as they were all new to the responsibilities of command. They were to establish close communication with each other before making the attack. About half-past eight o'clock I set out with General Johnston for a convenient position, – a hill in rear of Mitchell's ford, – where we waited for the opening of the attack on our right, from which I expected a decisive victory by mid-day, with the result of cutting off the Federal army from retreat upon Washington.

Meanwhile, about half-past five o'clock, the peal of a heavy rifled gun was heard in front of the Stone Bridge, its second shot striking through the tent of my signal officer, Captain E.P. Alexander; and at six o'clock a full rifled battery opened against Evans and then against Cocke, to which our artillery remained dumb, as it had not sufficient range to reply. But later, as the Federal skirmish-line advanced, it was engaged by ours, thrown well forward on the other side of the Run. A scattering musketry fire followed, and meanwhile, about seven o'clock, I ordered Jackson's brigade, with Imboden's and five guns of Walton's battery, to the left, with orders to support Cocke as well as Bonham; and the brigades of Bee and Bartow, under the command of the former, were also sent to the support of the left.

At half-past eight o'clock Evans, seeing that the Federal attack did not increase in boldness and vigor, and observing a lengthening line of dust above the trees to the left of the Warrenton turnpike, became satisfied that the attack in his front was but a feint, and that a column of the enemy was moving around through the woods to fall on his flank from the direction of Sudley ford. Informing his immediate commander, Cocke, of the enemy's movement, and of his own dispositions to meet it, he left four companies under cover at the Stone Bridge, and led the remainder of his force, six companies of Sloan's Fourth South Carolina and Wheat's battalion of Louisiana Tigers, with two six-pounder howitzers, across the valley of Young's Branch to the high ground beyond it. Resting his left on the Sudley road, he distributed his troops on each side of a small copse, with such cover as the ground afforded, and looking over the open fields and a reach of the Sudley road which the Federals must cover in their approach. His two howitzers were placed one at each end of his position, and here he silently awaited the masses of the enemy now drawing near.

The Federal turning column, about eighteen thousand strong, with twenty-four pieces of artillery, had moved down from Centreville by the Warrenton turnpike, and after passing Cub Run had struck to the right by a forest road to cross Bull Run at Sudley ford, about three miles above the Stone Bridge, moving by a long circuit for the purpose of attacking my left flank. The head of the column, Burnside's brigade of Hunter's division, at about 9:45 A.M. debouched from the woods into the open fields, in front of Evans. Wheat at once engaged their skirmishers, and as the Second Rhode Island regiment advanced, supported by its splendid battery of six rifled guns, the fronting thicket held by Evans's South Carolinians poured forth its sudden volleys, while the two howitzers flung their grape-shot upon the attacking line, which was soon shattered and driven back into the woods behind. Major Wheat, after handling his battalion with the utmost determination, had fallen severely wounded in the lungs. Burnside's entire brigade was now sent forward in a second charge, supported by eight guns; but they encountered again the unflinching fire of Evans's line, and were once more driven back to the woods, from the cover of which they continued the attack, reenforced after a time by the arrival of eight companies of United States regular infantry, under Major Sykes, with six pieces of artillery, quickly followed by the remaining regiments of Andrew Porter's brigade of the same division. The contest here lasted fully an hour; meanwhile Wheat's battalion, having lost its leader, had gradually lost its organization, and Evans, though still opposing these heavy odds with undiminished firmness, sought reenforcement from the troops in his rear.

General Bee, of South Carolina, a man of marked character, whose command lay in reserve in rear of Cocke, near the Stone Bridge, intelligently applying the general order given to the reserves, had already moved toward the neighboring point of conflict, and taken a position with his own and Bartow's brigades on the high plateau which stands in rear of Bull Run in the quarter of the Stone Bridge, and overlooking the scene of engagement upon the stretch of high ground from which it was separated by the valley of Young's Branch. This plateau is inclosed on three sides by two small water-courses, which empty into Bull Run within a few yards of each other, a half mile to the south of the Stone Bridge. Rising to an elevation of quite one hundred feet above the level of Bull Run at the bridge, it falls off on three sides to the level of the inclosing streams in gentle slopes, but furrowed by ravines of irregular directions and length, and studded with clumps and patches of young pines and oaks. The general direction of the crest of the plateau is oblique to the course of Bull Run in that quarter and to the Sudley and turnpike roads, which intersect each other at right angles. On the north-western brow, overlooking Young's Branch, and near the Sudley road, as the latter climbs over the plateau, stood the house of the widow Henry, while to its right and forward on a projecting spur stood the house and sheds of the free negro Robinson, just behind the turnpike, densely embowered in trees and shrubbery and environed by a double row of fences on two sides. Around the eastern and southern brow of the plateau an almost unbroken fringe of second-growth pines gave excellent shelter for our marksmen, who availed themselves of it with the most satisfactory skill. To the west, adjoining the fields that surrounded the houses mentioned, a broad belt of oaks extends directly across the crest on both sides of the Sudley road, in which, during the battle, the hostile forces contended for the mastery. General Bee, with a soldier's eye to the situation, skillfully disposed his forces. His two brigades on either side of Imboden's battery – which he had borrowed from his neighboring reserve, Jackson's brigade – were placed in a small depression of the plateau in advance of the Henry house, whence he had a full view of the contest on the opposite height across the valley of Young's Branch. Opening with his artillery upon the Federal batteries, he answered Evans's request by advising him to withdraw to his own position on the height; but Evans, full of the spirit that would not retreat, renewed his appeal that the forces in rear would come to help him hold his ground. The newly arrived forces had given the Federals such superiority at this point as to dwarf Evans's means of resistance, and General Bee, generously yielding his own better judgment to Evans's persistence, led the two brigades across the valley under the fire of the enemy's artillery, and threw them into action – one regiment in the copse held by Colonel Evans, two along a fence on the right, and two under General Bartow on the prolonged right of this line, but extended forward at a right angle and along the edge of a wood not more than a hundred yards from that held by the enemy's left, where the contest at short range became sharp and deadly, bringing many casualties to both sides. The Federal infantry, though still in superior numbers, failed to make any headway against this sturdy van, notwithstanding Bee's whole line was hammered also by the enemy's powerful batteries, until

Heintzelman's division of two strong brigades, arriving from Sudley ford, extended the fire on the Federal right, while its battery of six ten-pounder rifled guns took an immediately effective part from a position behind the Sudley road. Against these odds the Confederate force was still endeavoring to hold its ground, when a new enemy came into the field upon its right. Major Wheat, with characteristic daring and restlessness, had crossed Bull Run alone by a small ford above the Stone Bridge, in order to reconnoiter, when he and Evans had first moved to the left, and, falling on some Federal scouts, had shouted a taunting defiance and withdrawn, not, however, without his place of crossing having been observed. This disclosure was now utilized by Sherman's (W.T.) and Keyes's brigades of Tyler's division; crossing at this point, they appeared over the high bank of the stream and moved into position on the Federal left. There was no choice now for Bee but to retire—a movement, however, to be accomplished under different circumstances than when urged by him upon Evans. The three leaders endeavored to preserve the steadiness of the ranks as they withdrew over the open fields, aided by the fire of Imboden's guns on the plateau and the retiring howitzers; but the troops were thrown into confusion, and the greater part soon fell into rout across Young's Branch and around the base of the height in the rear of the Stone Bridge.

Meanwhile, in rear of Mitchell's ford, I had been waiting with General Johnston for the sound of conflict to open in the quarter Centreville upon the Federal left flank and rear (making allowance, however, for the delays possible to commands unused to battle), when I was chagrined to hear from General D.R. Jones that, while he had been long ready for movement upon Centreville, General Ewell had not come up to form on his right, though he had sent him between seven and eight o'clock a copy of his own order which recited that Ewell had been already ordered to begin the movement. I dispatched an immediate order to Ewell to advance; but within a quarter of an hour, just as I received a dispatch from him informing me that he had received no order to advance in the morning, the firing on the left began to increase so intensely as to indicate a severe attack, whereupon General Johnston said that he would go personally to that quarter.

After weighing attentively the firing, which seemed rapidly and heavily increasing, it appeared to me that the troops on the right would be unable to get into position before the Federal offensive should have made too much progress on our left, and that it would be better to abandon it altogether, maintaining only a strong demonstration so as to detain the enemy in front of our right and center, and hurry up all available reenforcements—including the reserves that were to have moved upon Centreville—to our left and fight the battle out in that quarter. Communicating this view to General Johnston, who approved it (giving his advice, as he said, for what it was worth, as he was not acquainted with the country), I ordered Ewell, Jones, and Longstreet to make a strong demonstration all along their front on the other side of the run, and ordered the reserves below our position, Holmes's brigade with six guns, and Early's brigade, also two regiments of Bonham's brigade, near at hand, to move swiftly to the left. General Johnston and I now set out at full speed for the point of conflict. We arrived there just as Bee's troops, after giving way, were fleeing in disorder behind the height in rear of the Stone Bridge. They had come around between the base of the hill and the Stone Bridge into a shallow ravine which ran up to a point on the crest where Jackson had already formed his brigade along the edge of the woods. We found the commanders resolutely stemming the farther flight of the routed forces, but vainly endeavoring to restore order, and our own efforts were as futile. Every segment of line we succeeded in forming was again dissolved while another was being formed; more than two thousand men were shouting each some suggestion to his neighbor, their voices mingling with the noise of the shells hurtling through the trees overhead, and all word of command drowned in the confusion and uproar. It was at this moment that General Bee used the famous expression, «Look at Jackson's brigade! It stands there like a stone wall» – a name that passed from the brigade to its immortal commander. The disorder seemed irretrievable, but happily the thought came to me that if their colors were planted out to the front the men might rally on them, and I gave the order to carry the standards forward some forty yards, which was promptly executed by the regimental officers, thus drawing the common eye of the troops. They now received easily the orders to advance and form on the line of their colors, which they obeyed with a general movement; and as General Johnston and myself rode forward shortly after with the colors of the Fourth Alabama by our side, line that had fought all morning, and had fled, routed and disordered, now advanced again into position as steadily as veterans. The Fourth Alabama had previously lost all its field officers, and noticing Colonel S.R. Gist, an aide to General Bee, a young man whom I had known as Adjutant-General of South Carolina, and whom I greatly esteemed, I presented him as an able and brave commander to the stricken regiment, who cheered their new leader, and maintained under him, to the end of the day, their previous gallant behavior. We had come none too soon, as the enemy's forces, flushed with the belief of accomplished victory, were already advancing across the valley of Young's Branch and up the slope, where they had encountered for a while the fire of the Hampton Legion, which had been led forward to the Robinson house and the turnpike in front covering the retreat and helping materially to check the panic of Bee's routed forces.

As soon as order was restored I requested General Johnston to go back to Portici (the Lewis house), and from that point – which I considered most favorable for the purpose – forward me the reenforcements as they would come from the Bull Run lines below and those that were expected to arrive from Manassas, while I should direct the field. General Johnston was disinclined to leave the battle-field for that position. As I had been compelled to leave my chief-of-staff, Colonel Jordan, at Manassas to forward any troops arriving there, I felt it was a necessity that one of us should go to this duty, and that it was his place to do so, as I felt I was responsible for the battle. He considerately yielded to my urgency, and we had the benefit of his energy and sagacity in so directing the reenforcements toward the field as to be readily and effectively assistant to my pressing needs and insure the success of the day.

As General Johnston departed for Portici, I hastened to form our line of battle against the oncoming enemy. I ordered up the Forty-ninth and Eighth Virginia regiments from Cocke's neighboring brigade in the Bull Run lines. Gartrell's Seventh Georgia I placed in position on the left of Jackson's brigade, along the belt of pines occupied by the latter on the eastern rim of the plateau. As the Forty-ninth Virginia rapidly came up, its colonel, ex-Governor William Smith, was encouraging them with cheery word and manner, and, as they approached, indicated to them the immediate presence of the commander. As the regiment raised a loud cheer, the name was caught by some of the troops of Jackson's brigade in the immediate wood, who rushed out calling for General Beauregard. Hastily acknowledging these happy signs of sympathy and confidence, which reenforce alike the capacity of commander and troops, I placed the Forty-ninth Virginia in position on the extreme left next to Gartrell, and as I paused to say a few words to Jackson, while hurrying back to the right, my horse was killed under me by a bursting shell, a fragment of which carried away part of the heel of my boot. The Hampton Legion, which had suffered greatly, was placed on the right of Jackson's brigade, and Hunton's Eighth Virginia, as it arrived, upon the right of Hampton; the two latter being drawn somewhat to the rear so as to form with Jackson's right regiment a reserve, and be ready likewise to make defense against any advance from the direction of the Stone Bridge, whence there was imminent peril from the enemy's heavy forces, as I had just stripped that position almost entirely of troops to meet the active crisis on the plateau, leaving this quarter now covered only by a few men, whose defense was otherwise assisted solely by the obstruction of an abatis.

With six thousand five hundred men and thirteen pieces of artillery, I now awaited the onset of the enemy, who were pressing forward twenty thousand strong, with twenty-four pieces of superior artillery and seven companies of regular cavalry. They soon appeared over the farther rim of the plateau, seizing the Robinson house on my right and the Henry house opposite my left center. Near the latter they placed in position the two powerful batteries of Ricketts and Griffin of the regular army, and pushed forward up the Sudley road, the slope of which was cut so deep below the adjacent ground as to afford a covered way up to the plateau. Supported by the formidable lines of Federal musketry, these two batteries lost no time in making themselves felt, while three more batteries in rear on the high ground beyond the Sudley and Warrenton cross-roads swelled the shower of shell that fell among our ranks.

Our own batteries, Imboden's, Stanard's, five of Walton's guns, reenforced later by Pendleton's and Alburtis's (their disadvantage being reduced by the shortness of range), swept the surface of the plateau from their position on the eastern rim. I felt that, after the accidents of the morning, much depended on maintaining the steadiness of the troops against the first heavy onslaught, and rode along the lines encouraging the men to unflinching behavior, meeting, as I passed each command, a cheering response. The steady fire of their musketry told severely on the Federal ranks, and the splendid action of our batteries was a fit preface to the marked skill exhibited by our artillerists during the war. The enemy suffered particularly from the musketry on our left, now further reenforced by the Second Mississippi—the troops in this quarter confronting each other at very short range. Here two companies of Stuart's cavalry charged through the Federal ranks that filled the Sudley road, increasing the disorder wrought upon that flank of the enemy. But with superior numbers the Federals were pushing on new regiments in the attempt to flank my position, and several guns, in the effort to enfilade ours, were thrust forward so near the Thirty-third Virginia that some of its men sprang forward and captured them, but were driven back by an overpowering force of Federal musketry. Although the enemy were held well at bay, their pressure became so strong that I resolved to take the offensive, and ordered a charge on my right for the purpose of recovering the plateau. The movement, made with alacrity and force by the commands of Bee, Bartow, Evans, and Hampton, thrilled the entire line, Jackson's brigade piercing the enemy's center, and the left of the line under Gartrell and Smith following up the charge, also, in that quarter, so that the whole of the open surface of the plateau was swept clear of the Federals.

Apart from its impression on the enemy, the effect of this brilliant onset was to give a short breathing-spell to our troops from the immediate strain of conflict, and encourage them in withstanding the still more strenuous offensive that was soon to bear upon them. Reorganizing our line of battle under the unremitting fire of the Federal batteries opposite, I prepared to meet the new attack which the enemy were about to make, largely reenforced by the fresh troops of Howard's brigade, newly arrived on the field. The Federals again pushed up the slope, the face of which partially afforded good cover from the numerous ravines that scored it and the clumps of young pines and oaks with which it was studded, while the sunken Sudley road formed a good ditch and parapet for their aggressive advance upon my left flank and rear. Gradually they pressed our lines back and regained possession of their lost ground and guns. With the Henry and Robinson houses once more in their possession, they resumed the offensive, urged forward by their commanders with conspicuous gallantry.

The conflict now became very severe for the final possession of this position, which was the key for victory. The Federal numbers enabled them so to extend their lines through the woods beyond the Sudley road as to outreach my left flank, which I was compelled partly to throw back, so as to meet the attack from that quarter; meanwhile their numbers equally enabled them to outflank my right in the direction of the Stone Bridge, imposing anxious watchfulness in that direction. I knew that I was safe if I could hold out till the arrival of reenforcements, which was but a matter of time; and, with the full sense of my own responsibility, I was determined to hold the line of the plateau, even if surrounded on all sides, until assistance should come, unless my forces were sooner overtaken by annihilation.

It was now between half-past two and three o'clock; a scorching sun increased the oppression of the troops, exhausted from incessant fighting against such heavy odds, many having been engaged since the morning. Fearing lest the Federal offensive should secure too firm a grip, and knowing the fatal result that might spring from any grave infraction of my line, I determined to make another effort for the recovery of the plateau, and ordered a charge of the entire line of battle, including the reserves, which at this crisis I myself led into action. The movement of the several commands was made with such keeping and dash that the whole surface of the plateau was swept clear of the enemy, who were driven down the slope and across the turnpike on our right and the valley of Young's Branch on our left, leaving in our final possession the Robinson and Henry houses, with most of Ricketts's and Griffin's batteries, the men of which were mostly shot down where they bravely stood by their guns. Fisher's Sixth North Carolina, directed to the Lewis house by Colonel Jordan from Manassas, where it had just arrived, and thence to the field by General Johnston, came up in happy time to join in this charge on the left. Withers's Eighteenth Virginia, which I had ordered up from Cocke's brigade, was also on hand in time to follow and give additional effect to the charge, capturing, with the Hampton

Legion, several guns, which were immediately turned and served upon the broken ranks of the enemy by some of our officers. This handsome work, which broke the Federal fortunes of the day, was done, however, at severe cost. The soldierly Bee, and the gallant, impetuous Bartow, whose day of strong deeds was about to close with such credit, fell a few rods back of the Henry house, near the very spot whence in the morning they had first looked forth upon Evans's struggle with the enemy. Colonel Fisher also fell at the very head of his troops. Seeing Captain Ricketts, who was badly wounded in the leg, and having known him in the old army, I paused from my anxious duties to ask him whether I could do anything for him. He answered that he wanted to be sent back to Washington. As some of our prisoners were there held under threats of not being treated as prisoners of war, I replied that that must depend upon how our prisoners were treated, and ordered him to be carried to the rear. I mention this because the report of the Federal Committee on the Conduct of the War exhibits Captain Ricketts as testifying that I only approached him to say that he would be treated as our prisoners might be treated. I sent my own surgeons to care for him, and allowed his wife to cross the lines and accompany him to Richmond; and my Adjutant-General, Colonel Jordan, escorting her to the car that carried them to that city, personally attended to the comfortable placing of the wounded enemy for the journey.

That part of the enemy who occupied the woods beyond our left and across the Sudley road had not been reached by the headlong charge which had swept their comrades from the plateau; but the now arriving reenforcements (Kershaw's Second and Cash's Eighth South Carolina) were led into that quarter. Kemper's battery also came up, preceded by its commander, who, while alone, fell into the hands of a number of the enemy, who took him prisoner, until a few moments later, when he handed them over to some of our own troops accompanying his battery. A small plateau (Bald Hill), within the southwest angle of the Sudley and turnpike crossroads, was still held by a strong Federal brigade—Howard's fresh troops, together with Sykes's battalion of regulars; and while Kershaw and Cash, after passing through the skirts of the oak wood along the Sudley road, engaged this force, Kemper's battery was sent forward by Kershaw along the same road, into position near where a hostile battery had been captured, and whence it played upon the enemy in the open field.

Quickly following these regiments came Preston's Twenty-eighth Virginia, which, passing through the woods, encountered and drove back some Michigan troops, capturing Brigadier-General Wilcox. It was now about three o'clock, when another important reenforcement came to our aid. Elzey's brigade, seventeen hundred strong, of the Army of the Shenandoah, which, coming from Piedmont by railroad, had arrived at Manassas station, six miles in rear of the battle-field, at noon, and had been without delay directed thence toward the field by Colonel Jordan, aided by Major T.G. Rhett, who that morning had passed from General Bonham's to General Johnston's staff. Upon nearing the vicinity of the Lewis house, the brigade was directed by a staff officer sent by General Johnston toward the left of the field. As it reached the oak wood, just across the Sudley road, led by General Kirby Smith, the latter fell severely wounded; but the command devolved upon Colonel Elzey, an excellent officer, who was now guided by Captain D.B. Harris of the Engineers, a highly accomplished officer of my staff, still farther to the left and through the woods, so as to form in extension of the line of the preceding reenforcements. Beckham's battery, of the same command, was hurried forward by the Sudley road and around the woods into position near the Chinn house; from a well-selected point of action, in full view of the enemy that filled the open fields west of the Sudley road, it played with deadly and decisive effect upon their ranks, already under the fire of Elzey's brigade. Keyes's brigade, which had made its way across the turnpike in rear of the Stone Bridge, was lurking along under cover of the ridges and a wood in order to turn my line on the right, but was easily repulsed by Latham's battery, already placed in position over that approach by Captain Harris, aided by Alburtis's battery, opportunely sent to Latham's left by General Jackson, and supported by fragments of troops collected by staff officers. Meanwhile, the enemy had formed a line of battle of formidable proportions on the opposite height, and stretching in crescent outline, with flanks advanced, from the Pittsylvania (Carter) mansion on their left across the Sudley road in rear of Dogan's, and reaching toward the Chinn house. They offered a fine spectacle as they threw forward a cloud of skirmishers down the opposite slope, preparatory to a new assault against the line on the plateau. But their right was now severely pressed by the troops that had successively arrived; the force in the south-west angle of the Sudley and Warrenton cross-roads were driven from their position, and, as Early's brigade, which, by direction of General Johnston, had swept around by the rear of the woods through which Elzey had passed, appeared on the field, his line of march bore upon the flank of the enemy, as he was now retiring in that quarter.

The movement upon my extreme left was masked by the trend of the woods from many of our forces on the plateau; and bidding those of my staff and escort around me raise a loud cheer, I dispatched the information to the several commands, with orders to go forward in a common charge. Before the full advance of the Confederate ranks the enemy's whole line, whose right was already yielding, irretrievably broke, fleeing across Bull Run by every available direction. Major Sykes's regulars, aided by Sherman's brigade, made a steady and handsome withdrawal, protecting the rear of the routed forces, and enabling many to escape by the Stone Bridge. Having ordered in pursuit all the troops on the field, I went to the Lewis house, and, the battle being ended, turned over the command to General Johnston. Mounting a fresh horse —the fourth on that day,—I started to press the pursuit which was being made by our infantry and cavalry, some of the latter having been sent by General Johnston from Lewis's ford to intercept the enemy on the turnpike. I was soon overtaken, however, by a courier bearing a message from Major T.G. Rhett, General Johnston's chief-of-staff on duty at Manassas railroad station, informing me of a report that a large Federal force, having pierced our lower line on Bull Run, was moving upon Camp Pickens, my depot of supplies near Manassas. I returned, and communicated this important news to General Johnston. Upon consultation it was deemed best that I should take Ewell's and Holmes's brigades, which were hastening up to the battlefield, but too late for the action, and fall on this force of the enemy, while reenforcements should be sent me from the pursuing forces, who were to be recalled for that purpose. To head off the danger and gain time, I hastily mounted a force of infantry behind the cavalry-men then present, but, on approaching the line of march near McLean's ford, which the Federals must have taken, I learned that the news was a false alarm caught from the return of General Jones's forces to this side of the run, the similarity of the uniforms and the direction of their march having convinced some nervous person that they were a force of the enemy. It was now almost dark, and too late to resume the broken pursuit; on my return I met the coming forces, and, as they were very tired, I ordered them to halt and bivouac for the night where they were. After giving such attention as I could to the troops, I started for Manassas, where I arrived about ten o'clock, and found Mr. Davis at my head-quarters with General Johnston. Arriving from Richmond late in the afternoon, Mr. Davis had immediately galloped to the field, accompanied by Colonel Jordan. They had met between Manassas and the battle-field the usual number of stragglers to the rear, whose appearance belied the determined array then sweeping the enemy before it, but Mr. Davis had the happiness to arrive in time to witness the last of the Federals disappearing beyond Bull Run. The next morning I received from his hand at our breakfast-table my commission, dated July 21, as General in the Army of the Confederate States, and after his return to Richmond the kind congratulations of the Secretary of War and of General Lee, then acting as military adviser to the President.

It was a point made at the time at the North that, just as the Confederate troops were about to break and flee, the Federal troops anticipated them by doing so, being struck into this precipitation by the arrival upon their flank of the Shenandoah forces marching from railroad trains halted *en route* with that aim—a statement that has been repeated by some writers on both sides, and by an ambitious but superficial French author.

There were certain sentiments of a personal character clustering about this first battle, and personal anxiety as to its issue, that gladly accepted this theory. To this may be added the general readiness to accept a sentimental or ultra-dramatic, explanation—the magic wrought by the delay or arrival of some force, or the death or coming of somebody, or any other single magical event—whereby history is easily caught, rather than to seek an understanding of that which is but the gradual result of the operation of many forces, both of opposing design and actual collision, modified more or less by the falls of chance. The personal sentiment, though natural enough at the time, has no place in any military estimate, nor place of any kind at this day. The battle of Manassas was, like any other battle, a progression and development from the deliberate counter-employment of the military resources in hand, affected by accidents, as always, but of a kind very different from those referred to. My line of battle, which had twice not only withstood the enemy's attack, but taken the offensive and driven him back in disorder, was becoming momentarily stronger from the arrival, at last, of the reenforcements provided for; and if the enemy had remained on the field till the arrival of Ewell and Holmes, they would have been so strongly outflanked that many who escaped would have been destroyed or captured.

Though my adversary's plan of battle was a good one against a passive defensive opponent, such as he may have deemed I must be from the respective numbers and positions of our forces, it would, in my judgment, have been much better if, with more dash, the flank attack had been made by the stone bridge itself and the ford immediately above it. The plan adopted, however, favored above all things the easy execution of the offensive operations I had designed and ordered against his left flank and rear at Centreville. His turning column—eighteen thousand strong, and presumably his best troops—was thrown off by a long ellipse through a narrow forest road to Sudley ford, from which it moved down upon my left flank, and was thus dislocated from his main body. This severed movement of his forces not only left his exposed left and rear at Centreville weak against the simultaneous offensive of my heaviest forces upon it, but the movement of his turning column would have been disconcerted and paralyzed by the early sound of this heavy conflict in its rear, and it could not even have made its way back so as to be available for maneuver before the Centreville fraction had been thrown back upon it in disorder. A new army is very liable to panic, and, in view of the actual result of the battle, the conclusion can hardly be resisted that the panic which fell on the Federal army would thus have seized it early in the day, and with my forces in such position as to wholly cut off its retreat upon Washington. The commander of the front line on my right, who failed to move because he received no immediate order, was instructed in the plan of attack, and should have gone forward the moment General Jones, upon whose right he was to form, exhibited his own order, which mentioned one as having been already sent to that commander. I exonerated him after the battle, as he was technically not in the wrong; but one could not help recalling Desaix, who even moved in a direction opposite to his technical orders when facts plainly showed him the service he ought to perform, whence the glorious result of Marengo,—or help believing that if Jackson had been there, the movement would not have balked. The Federal commander's flanking movement, being thus uninterrupted by such a counter-movement as I had projected, was further assisted through the imperfection and inefficiency of the staff organization of the army, through which I was left unacquainted with the actual state of affairs on my left. The Federal attack, already thus greatly favored, and encouraged, moreover, by the rout of General Bee's advanced line, failed for two reasons: their forces were not handled with concert of masses (a fault often made later on both sides), and the individual action of the Confederate troops was superior, notwithstanding inferiority in numbers, arms, and equipments, and for a very palpable reason. That one army was fighting for union and the other for disunion is a political expression; the actual fact on the battle-field, in the face of cannon and musket, was that the Federal troops came as invaders, and the Southern troops stood as defenders of their homes, and further than this we need not go. The armies were vastly greater than had ever before fought on this continent, and were the largest volunteer armies ever assembled since the era of regular armies. The personal material on both sides was of exceptionally good character, and collectively superior to that of any subsequent period of the war. The Confederate army was filled with generous youths who had answered the first call of the country. For certain kinds of field duty they were not as yet adapted, many of them having at first come with their baggage and servants; these they had to dispense with, but, not to offend their susceptibilities, I then exacted the least work from them, apart from military drills, even to the prejudice of important field-works, when I could not get sufficient negro labor; they «had come to fight, and not to handle the pick and shovel,» and their fighting redeemed well their shortcomings as intrenchers. Before I left that gallant army, however, it had learned how readily the humbler could aid the nobler duty.

THE BATTLE OF PLEASANT HILL

By Sarah A. Dorsey

In the month of March, 1864, General Banks made his famous raid up the valley of the Red River. General Taylor, stationed at Alexandria, had been advised in February, by secret information sent him from New Orleans, of the probable Federal plan of attack, by one division under A.J. Smith, from Vicksburg, and General Banks from New Orleans, who was to march up through the Têche country. Taylor immediately notified General Kirby Smith of his suspicions of this attack, and Smith began to concentrate his troops to meet the attack, if so made.

Smith's department was very large, and so desolated in Arkansas and Louisiana, that in order to subsist the troops, it was necessary to scatter them; so the forces were scattered over Louisiana and Texas. Shreveport and its vicinity was the central point in this widely-scattered circle of troops. Upon the reception of Taylor's information, Smith began to draw in his forces.

General A.J. Smith came up the Red River, Banks advanced up the Têche. It was estimated by us that Banks had a force of forty thousand men, and a co-operating navy of sixty gunboats and transports, «and a legion of camp-followers and speculators,» in his train. The Federals captured Fort DeRussy, an inferior earthwork below Alexandria, and then marched unchecked up the whole valley of the Red River, until they reached Mansfield, a small town between Shreveport and Natchitoches. Taylor had fallen back before the Federals, skirmishing every day, until he found himself here almost at the doors of Shreveport, within a day's march of the Texas border. Taylor was too much like his father, in temperament, not to be very soon wearied of *retreat*. He knew too much about Buena Vista, for that modus operandi to content him very long. He was one of our best fighting-men,—a trifle too impatient and passionate, with perhaps not sufficient sense of subordination. In truth, he was both a very able and very imperious man. He had even dared to resist *Stonewall Jackson*, and fight at Port Republic, almost in disobedience to orders. He gained a victory then, and of course General Jackson thanked him; but if he hadn't been successful, he would have been *broke*. So it was now at Mansfield. Taylor was tired of running. He resolved to make a stand, and sent a despatch to Smith, at Shreveport, to that effect. Taylor had 9,000 men at Mansfield. He selected his battle-ground as well as he could, about a quarter of a mile from Mansfield. The country here is hilly, and heavily wooded.

The line of battle was single. Mouton commanded his own Brigade, with Polignac's in the center. Majors, with his cavalry dismounted, formed the left wing. De Bray, with mounted cavalry, was posted on the extreme right. Churchill and Parsons, with Missouri and Arkansas troops, acted as reserves, stationed three miles in the rear. The public road, by which the Federals were advancing, ran over a very steep hill. They had posted one of their best batteries (Nims'), – the same battery that Allen had rushed upon, captured and lost, after being wounded at the battle of Baton Rouge, – upon the top of this high hill. Taylor rode along this line, and when he passed Polignac, he called out, «Little Frenchman, I am going to fight Banks here, if he has a million of men!» Taylor now ordered Mouton to advance until he engaged the enemy. Mouton led the charge of infantry. By agreement, all the Confederate officers retained their horses, which was one reason why so many of them were killed in this famous charge. Mouton charged down a hill, over a fence, through a ravine, then up a hill right in the teeth of the guns. The charge lasted twenty-five minutes. The men were moved forward at double-quick, exposed to a terrible fire all the time, especially whilst in the ravine, between the woods and the hill, upon which the Federal batteries were stationed. The exposure to grape and canister was dreadful; many Confederates fell here. The men were nearly breathless when they struggled up the ravine. Mouton commanded them to throw themselves prostrate a moment, to recover breath. Then they sprang up, and rushed on to the attack. The officers fell fast. Armand, at the head of his Creoles, had his horse killed, and received a shot in the arm. Starting to his feet, after disengaging himself from his dying steed, he ran on by the side of his men, waving his sword in the other unwounded hand. Again a shot struck him – he fell – a wound through both thighs. He raised himself again, on his wounded arm, half-reclining, with the life-blood pouring in torrents, he still waved his sword, and cheered on his Louisianians. They responded with a cry of vengeance. Another shot struck Armand in the breast, – the gleaming sword dropped from the cold hand. Armand lay dead. The Eighteenth Louisiana rushed on. Polignac led his troops gallantly. Mouton was always in the front. The guns were taken after a desperate struggle. The Federals broke and fled. Mouton pursued: he passed a group of thirty-five Federal soldiers; they threw down their arms in token of surrender. Mouton turned, lifting his hand to stay the firing of the Confederates upon this group of prisoners: as he did so, five of the Federals stooped down, picked up their guns, aimed them at the generous Confederate: in a moment, five balls pierced the noble, magnanimous breast; Mouton dropped from his saddle dead, without a word or a sigh. The Confederates who witnessed this cowardly deed, gave a yell of vengeful indignation, and before their officers could check them, the thirty-five Federals lay dead around Mouton. The chase of the Federals was continued a mile and a half by this division, then the reserves under Walker and Churchill took up the hunt, and drove back the enemy to Pleasant Hill. Half way between Pleasant Hill and Mansfield, there was a creek of pure water, for which there was a heavy fight. It ended in the Confederates *retaining possession of the water*, on whose margin they bivouacked that night, – Major-General N.P. Banks' assertion to the contrary notwithstanding. Mouton had (2,200) twenty-two hundred men in this charge; he lost seven hundred and sixty-two. Five officers were killed, amongst them Taylor, of the Seventeenth Texas, a much-beloved officer. It was the musket-fire from the enemy on the left of the ravine, and the grape and canister in it, that killed most of Mouton's men. Mouton said to Polignac, previous to the attack, «Let us charge them right in the face, and throw them into the valley.»

The battle of Mansfield was fought on the 8th of April. It was a day of fasting and prayer, specially ordered by General Smith, and spent by most of us, ignorant of the contest that was transpiring, on our knees before our altars. Taylor now pressed his success. He had captured an immense wagon-train, – two hundred and ninety-five wagons, filled with most valuable stores; had taken Nims' Battery of six guns, which Allen had such cause to remember; had also captured twenty-two guns on the road. The «Grand Army» fled in wild confusion. At Pleasant Hill the Federals were re-enforced. Taylor engaged them again, with Walker and Churchill's Divisions. The fight was heavy; and night fell on «a drawn battle;» but the Federals retreated under cover of darkness, and Taylor camped on the battle-ground.